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Conversion deal reached for children adopted abroad

By HAIM SHAPIRO

While the Neeman Committee yesterday faced a new stumbling block in its effort to resolve the registration of Conservative and Reform converts as Jews, agreement was reached by a subcommittee set up to deal with the conversion of infants adopted abroad.

The new obstacle is a letter from the Chief Rabbinate to the Reform movement, saying that

Chief rabbis won't meet Reform leaders, Page 6

the chief rabbis could not meet with Reform leaders until the movement made a number of commitments, among them to abandon the principle of patrilineal descent, to stop recognizing mixed marriages, and to accept the divine origin of the Torah (See page 6).

Despite this, the Chief Rabbinate has expressed satisfaction with an agreement that would make it easier for parents who adopt children abroad to have them converted to Judaism here, according to Na'amat chairwoman Ofra Friedman.

Friedman said the agreement was to have been submitted to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu yesterday, but the event was postponed.

Until now, the rabbinical courts have usually refused to convert adopted children unless the parents agreed to adopt an Orthodox life-style and send the children to religious schools. The agreement provides for special rabbinical courts which would make what Friedman described as only "elementary" demands of observance on the parents.

The special rabbinical courts are to deal with the conversion of the infants quickly and the subcommittee is to continue to function for five years, to ensure that the new courts work as planned.

An important factor in the arrangement is that in addition to Friedman and former Rabbi Haim Druckman, a former National Religious Party MK, the subcommittee also includes Rabbi Eli Ben-Dehan, director-general of the rabbinical courts. Friedman said yesterday that she understood that the Chief Rabbinate agreed to the plan.

Rabbi Reuven Hammer, head of the Conservative Rabbinical Court, which in February 1955 converted 12 such infants at a ceremony at Kibbutz Hanaton, reacted positively to the agreement.

See CONVERSION, Page 4

North American Newsstand Prices for J.P. Friday Edition
NY, NJ: \$3.00
Canada: CDN \$5.00 + TAX
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SHABBAT	BEGINS	ENDS
Jerusalem	4:06 p.m.	5:22 p.m.
Tel Aviv	4:24 p.m.	5:23 p.m.
Haifa	4:13 p.m.	5:20 p.m.
BeerSheva	4:22 p.m.	5:20 p.m.
Eilat	4:25 p.m.	5:27 p.m.



German terror suspect remanded

Stefan Josef Smyrek, a German tourist suspected of being sent by Hizbullah to carry out a suicide attack here, awaits the proceedings yesterday in Tel Aviv District Court, where he was charged with conspiring with an enemy and membership in a terrorist group. Story, Page 3. (Yael Someth/Israel Sun)

Court halts hospital strike

By JUDY SIEGEL

The Tel Aviv Regional Labor Court brought a temporary halt yesterday to the public-hospital strike that had postponed hundreds of non-emergency operations as well as tens of thousands of outpatient clinic visits and diagnostic institute tests, and sharply reduced the attendance of doctors and nurses on the wards.

The Israel Medical Association (IMA) was pleased by the development, which forces Finance Minister Yaakov Neeman or a representative to sit down "with good intentions" and discuss the health workers' opposition to changes in the medical system proposed by the Treasury.

The IMA said it declared a work dispute over the issue nearly three months ago but no one was willing to discuss the organization's complaints. The government had charged that the IMA-organized strike was "political" and thus did not require negotiations, but the two sides were told by the court to sit down, talk, and report back to the court on Sunday.

The protest tent the IMA set up opposite the Knesset at the beginning of the week was overflowing with hospital administrators, doctors, nurses, MKs (including some from parties that officially had favored the Treasury's changes) and representatives of patients' groups. In a rare show of unity, 30 hospital directors demonstrated against the threatened "destruction" of the egalitarian public health system.

The Finance Ministry's plan includes making the basket of health services flexible rather than mandatory for all the insurers, thereby encouraging competition among them; charging the public fees for using medical services in addition to paying health taxes on income; transferring responsibility for preventive medicine from the government to the health funds; and shifting geriatric nursing care to private insurance companies.

See HOSPITAL, Page 12

PM concedes health reform won't pass

Coalition loses two budget votes • Levy threatens to quit

By DAVID HARRIS and JAY BUSHINSKY

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu admitted yesterday during a meeting with Foreign Minister David Levy that planned Treasury reforms of the national health-care system would not be approved by the Knesset, a senior parliamentary source yesterday said.

Voting was abruptly halted last night when MK Avraham Ravitz withdrew a chapter of the economic arrangements bill from the agenda, leaving Knesset officials suggesting the entire bill now has to be reconsidered by the Finance Committee.

Meanwhile in the plenum last night Labor won the first two votes on more minor budget points

with three Geshet MKs voting with the opposition and several NRP members absent. Levy threatened to resign if the health section was not removed

Geshet in turmoil, Page 4

from the 1998 economic arrangements bill, according to a Geshet party colleague. Levy told Netanyahu that all Geshet MKs would vote against the health-related section.

Responding to the report, Netanyahu's spokesman said: "The prime minister is dealing with the issue."

In a bid to bury the political

hatchet and get the peace process moving again, Levy assured Netanyahu that his criticism of the government's recent performance was not personal, but an effort to remind the cabinet of its commitments and responsibilities.

Officials described the session as "conciliatory" and "constructive." They said Levy confirmed he was the "senior official" who warned earlier this week that hard-line ministers, including Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, Communications Minister Limor Livnat, Industry and Trade Minister Natan Sharanovsky and their National Religious Party colleagues, were unrealistic in seeking a redeployment from only six percent of the West Bank.

See HEALTH, Page 12

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NEWS

in brief

2 arrested in capital for preparing bombs

Jerusalem Police announced yesterday that it has arrested two Palestinians from Shuafat suspected of preparing explosives to use in terrorist attacks. Police said detectives from the minorities department arrested the two suspects on Tuesday. Police found four pipe bombs ready for use and another partially prepared bomb during a raid of the suspects' homes. Police said one of the suspects admitted to preparing pipe bombs, claiming he was suspected of collaborating with Israeli authorities and had planned to use the pipe bombs for self defense. The suspect told police he learned to prepare explosives when he had been an active Fatah member. The Jerusalem Magistrate's Court remanded the two suspects for seven days yesterday. *Margot Dudkevitch*

Court: Eskin can meet lawyer

Right-wing activist Avigdor Eskin met with his lawyer Naftali Wurtzburger yesterday after the Jerusalem District Court granted him permission earlier this week. Eskin is due for a remand hearing today. Before Eskin saw his lawyer, both he and Damian Pakovitch were held incommunicado since they were arrested on Sunday on suspicion of incitement. The police has clamped a news blackout on details of the case. *Elli Wohlgernter*

Peres: Arafat favors confederation with Jordan

Former prime minister Shimon Peres was quoted yesterday, in an interview with Kuwait's Arabic daily newspaper *al-Rai al-Am*, as saying that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat did not object to a proposal he had made earlier for a Palestinian confederation with Jordan. Peres was also quoted as saying he supported a Palestinian state and urged the government to honor its peace commitments. "When I declared my support for a Palestinian state, I never tried to conceal this fact," Peres said. *Reuters*

Israel to buy 50 attack vehicles from Turkey

Turkey is to sell 50 border-control attack and armored personnel carriers to Israel under a \$10 million deal, Turkish military officials said in Ankara yesterday. Israel is planning to use the vehicles in the security zone in Lebanon. Turkish officials said a formal agreement on the deal was expected to be signed in the coming months. The personnel carriers, called Scorpions, are produced by the Koc Group's Otokar Company. *Metehan Demir*

Bribery probe of police commander dropped

Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein and State Attorney Edna Arbel have closed the bribery investigation of Cmdr. Avi Cohen, head of the police intelligence unit. They said they dropped the case due to a lack of evidence and the length of time that has passed since the violations allegedly occurred. Cohen had been suspected of accepting bribes from haredi free-loan associations. The police inspector-general is to inspect the file and decide whether to take disciplinary action against Cohen. *Itim*

PA: No PM-Arafat summit planned

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH and MOHAMMED NAJIB

Palestinian officials denied yesterday that plans were under way to set up a summit with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and US President Bill Clinton next month in Washington. "The PA is not seeking a meet-

ing in order to produce photos but wants to succeed in peace negotiations in order to gain benefit from them," said PA Secretary Ahmad Abdul Rahman yesterday. "The Israeli government has lost its credibility in the eyes of the world and any such meeting will force the American Administration to review the process and demand that Israel implement the signed accords," he

added. Arafat announced meanwhile he had some new ideas to rescue the peace process. He refused to give any details but said he would discuss them when he meets Clinton. Arafat, who spoke at his Ramallah office, added that "it takes two sides to tango." Arafat also said he would reject any amendments to a security document being negotiated by Israeli,

Palestinian and US security officials. He charged that any changes in the document would be in violation of the Hebron Accords. Colonel Mohammed Al-Masri, the head of the Palestinian Intelligence Service's media section in Gaza, accused Israel of leaking details of the document, and charged that Netanyahu was trying to use it for his own politi-

cal means. "We are aware that our security needs and those of Israel are different," he said, contending that the document had already been agreed upon by both sides. Meanwhile in an unrelated event PA negotiator Saeb Erekat denied a report in the Saudi Arabian newspaper *A-Sharq* that he said that a renewal of the intifada was imminent.



Changing of the guard
A jovial Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu takes out a photo album at a ceremonial change of guard yesterday between his office's former director-general Avigdor Lieberman (left), and his successor Moshe Leon (right). *(Jane Harari)*

Year after attack on Tsur family Beit El plans expansion

BY ALLYN FISHER-LAN and JAY BUSHNICKY

Plans to expand the settlement of Beit El will be launched next week when the cornerstone is laid for a new neighborhood, in memory of two residents gunned down near the site a year ago. The neighborhood will bear the symbolic name of Maoz Tsur, the prayer recited when Hanukkah candles are lit, which also recalls victims Eta Tsur and her 12-year-old son, Ephraim. "We think it is an appropriate and right answer to the memory of the fallen, and also for entrenching Jewish settlement in the land of Israel," while leaders are discussing another pullback in the West Bank, Yoel Tsur, Eta's husband, said yesterday. He said that the ceremony would be held on Wednesday, the day after the Hebrew anniversary of the December 11, 1996, attack, in which three Palestinians opened fire on the family car, killing his wife and son. Among the leaders expected to attend the ceremony are Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, Interior Minister Eli Suissa, and Deputy Housing Minister Meir Porush, Tsur said. He said 140 housing units were planned for the neighborhood and that construction was expected to begin in two or three months. Mordechai's media adviser, Avi Zeevayahu, said that construction would begin in about eight months, and that Mordechai had given approval for the project last year. Tsur said "there is no time-out" on this construction plan, despite American requests to hold off on building in the settlements to avoid exacerbating tensions during the talks with the Palestinians. Tsur felt bitter that the government is considering another redeployment, given his own tragedy and other slayings of Israelis that have occurred since the Oslo Accords were signed. "We all know that this isn't a real peace agreement... they continue to malign Israel and create a complete lack of confidence in the entire document that was signed," he said. He added that to give up more land to the Palestinians would be like conceding "rooms in your own house." See SETTLEMENT, Page 4

CORRECTION

The terror attack on the Tsur family's car near Beit El took place in 1996, and its victims were Eta and her son Ephraim, and not as reported in yesterday's paper. Our apologies to the family.

Winning numbers

In yesterday's weekly Payis Hazaq drawing ticket number 314151 won NIS 1.5 million, while ticket number 509539 won the car. Tickets 277937, 589423, 720580, 206956, 743223, 113279, 472489 and 443855 won NIS 5,000. Tickets ending in 28033, 00771, 08877, 20400, 55849, 752447, 82447, 61926, 88846, 26556, 28775, 61600, 35711, 20234, 50647, 93414, 65759, 12458 and 30234 won NIS 1,000. Tickets ending in 737, 664, 184 and 422 won NIS 100. Tickets ending in 55, 85, 20 and 18 won NIS 30. Tickets ending in 73 and 40 won NIS 20. Tickets ending in 6 and 3 won NIS 10.

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Handwritten note in Arabic script: "انا لله واليه المرجع والمآب"



Going out with a bang

Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai (right) shakes the hand of outgoing Police Insp.-Gen. Assaf Hefetz at a meeting at the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv yesterday. While Mordechai and most of the IDF top brass were bidding farewell to Hefetz, police were busy pursuing a man driving a car with foreign plates who 'fired' a plastic bullet at guards at the Defense Ministry with a toy pistol. They overtook the vehicle, but the 'gunman' got away. It later transpired that the vehicle had been stolen.

(FOTO: Arish O'Sullivan; photo: Yael Somekh/Israel Sun)

Egypt Foreign Minister Amr Moussa:

Cairo monitoring reported Iran role in Luxor attack

News agencies

CAIRO - Egypt is "following closely" reports that Iran was involved in perpetrating the massacre of more than 50 Western tourists in Luxor last month, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa yesterday said.

Speaking to reporters after talks with Somali faction leaders at the presidential palace here, Moussa said Egypt had however found no evidence of Iranian involvement in the November 17 attack by Moslem extremists, despite "closely following" reports.

"We cannot say that we have news which confirms what was said," Moussa said.

"We have nothing to prove this, so this kind of information is not

credible enough."

His comments were Egypt's first reaction to Wednesday's report in *The Jerusalem Post* which said the new US ambassador to Israel, Edward Walker, had, during a talk with Foreign Minister David Levy, accused the Iranian Embassy in Damascus of being involved in the attack.

Moussa said the newspaper quoted unnamed diplomatic sources and not Walker himself.

"We only consider documented information," Moussa said.

Walker distanced himself from the report later Wednesday, saying "that is not exactly what I said."

The ambassador refused to comment further. "My conversations with the foreign minister are my business," he said.

In Teheran, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has denied that his country had any connection to the attack.

"The friendship and unity in the Moslem world, and the visit by the leaders of Moslem countries to Teheran, has forced the Zionist regime to turn to damaging propaganda of this kind," the spokesman said. "Propaganda campaigns of this type, however, will not change the world's anti-Zionist stance."

The spokesman also denied reports that there had been money transfers between an Iranian bank and Bank Hapoalim.

On Wednesday, Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini, also warned against "enemy propaganda" whose purpose is to "divide and conquer."

2 SLA soldiers lightly hurt

By DAVID RUDGE

Two South Lebanese Army soldiers were wounded during heavy fighting in South Lebanon yesterday. Gunmen fired mortars at a number of SLA and IDF positions in the security zone, from the coast to the foothills of Mt. Hermon in the east.

In one of the incidents, in the western sector, a mortar round

apparently scored a direct hit on a SLA position and wounded two soldiers. They were given first aid at the scene and one of them was later brought to a hospital in Israel for further treatment.

There were no IDF casualties in the long-range attacks, which prompted return fire by IDF and SLA gunners.

The attacks yesterday followed the death of an Amal gunman in

exchanges in the eastern sector the previous day. Amal has recently been trying to return to the fray following several years of relative inactivity.

Security sources in Lebanon said it appeared that Amal was unable to compete with Hizbullah on the social, welfare and economic levels. It was therefore trying to boost its image and prestige on the battlefield.

Charges pressed against German suspected of planning suicide attack

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH and news agencies

A German tourist suspected of being sent by Hizbullah to carry out a suicide attack here, was charged yesterday in Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court with attempting to harm security, conspiring with an enemy and membership in a terrorist group.

Stefan Josef Smyrek, 26, a convert to Islam, was arrested by the General Security Service on November 28 at Ben-Gurion Airport after he flew in from Amsterdam. The arrest was kept secret until Wednesday.

The charges against Smyrek carry a maximum life sentence,

his lawyer, Daniel Assan, said.

The court extended Smyrek's remand until January 4.

Security officials warned meanwhile that they expected the Iranian-backed Hizbullah would continue to step up efforts to try and carry out attacks in Israel by infiltrating agents via land, sea or air.

Smyrek reportedly appeared on Interpol's terrorist list and was detained briefly at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport before being allowed to fly to Israel. Dutch security officials reportedly tipped off Israeli officials about his pending arrival.

Hizbullah has denied recruiting Smyrek, charging that the incident

was fabricated by Israeli intelligence.

Smyrek's attorney told reporters that his client was in solitary confinement for more than three weeks and denied contact with his family or lawyer.

Assan added that his client had just ended a love affair with a Moslem woman he befriended in Germany, and that he never showed much interest in educating himself or working.

Smyrek also reportedly served prison time in Germany for drug charges and robbery.

Assan maintained that Smyrek had admitted to the charges because of the conditions of his confinement and added that his

client had a fertile imagination and that he probably fabricated the story.

Assan denied reports that his client was carrying a film recording of himself explaining his reasons for carrying out an attack.

He also cast doubt on whether the fact that his client may have been carrying a video, film, a map of Israel and a sum of money was enough to prove the charges against him.

Smyrek's stepfather said on Channel 2 last night that his wife was too distraught to speak.

When he was arrested, Smyrek was carrying \$4,000, a video camera, film and a map of Israel, officials said.

According to the charge sheet, Smyrek visited Lebanon where he was recruited by the Hizbullah and sent to a camp in the Bekaa Valley for training in the use of light weapons and explosives.

Smyrek remained in Lebanon between August and November, when he was told to return to Germany to obtain a new passport for travel to Israel, that would not show that he had visited Lebanon.

He was ordered by Hizbullah contacts to film densely populated areas in Tel Aviv and Haifa and gather as much information as possible to decide where an attack should take place.

His handlers then ordered him to travel to Turkey for final instructions about where to carry out the attack.

It is unclear whether Smyrek was to have obtained explosives from someone in Israel or was to bring them from Turkey.

Security officials have maintained there is a direct link between Hizbullah and Hamas, and said it is possible that Hamas activists would provide explosives for terrorists sent by Hizbullah to Israel.

This is the second time Hizbullah has attempted to send an agent into Israel to carry out a terrorist attack. In April 1996, a Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim, Hussein Mohammed Hussein Mikdad, was seriously wounded while preparing explosives for an attack in Israel.

Mikdad had flown in from Switzerland with the explosives, using a forged British passport in the name of Andrew Jonathan Charles Newman. The explosion occurred in a room of the East Jerusalem Lawrence Hotel.

Meanwhile German journalist Ulrich Sahn said German officials were outraged that the announcement of Smyrek's arrest was made on Christmas Eve. Sahn said the holiday made it nearly impossible to obtain a German government response to the arrest.

"I annoyed several government officials including the German Foreign Minister by interrupting them during their holiday," he said.

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SHIKUN OVDIM OR-YAM

Gesher faction in turmoil

BUDGET '98

By DAVID HARRIS

Gesher MK Michael Kleiner yesterday accused party colleague Maxim Levy of being a major cause of a recent increase in unemployment and "a demagogue."

The accusations came at the first faction meeting held by Gesher in several weeks, amid speculation that Levy and his brother, Foreign Minister David Levy, were not speaking.

"I speak to Maxim Levy like David Levy does," said Kleiner. During voting yesterday on the budget, Maxim Levy voted with the opposition, Kleiner supported the coalition, with the party's three remaining MKs abstaining.

"In every party there is friction," said Maxim Levy, who refused to comment on personal differences in the party. "If there is a crisis, you tell me about it," he said.

Maxim Levy has refused to support the government on a variety of budget issues, while party colleagues object to the health sections of the 1998 budget arrangements bill.

Kleiner alleged that Maxim Levy's success in raising the minimum wage from 45 percent of the average salary to 47.5% was the reason why people were being fired from textile and other low-tech industries.



Health Minister Yehoshua Matza (standing) listens yesterday as a striking doctor makes his point, in the protest tent set up by the Israel Medical Association opposite from the Knesset. Geshher MK Maxim Levy is seated, second from left. (Brian Hendler)

"Whoever raised the minimum wage must now look directly into the eyes of the unemployed

and said 'it's my fault you have no job,'" said Kleiner. "I feel sorry for the weak

because they don't know who's helping them and who's harming them."

Party sources last night denied that Gesher was on the verge of collapse.

Land of Israel Front threatens budget delay

By DAVID HARRIS

Right-wing MKs, including half of the Land of Israel Front, are threatening to vote against the budget in a bid to delay the next stage of the withdrawal from the West Bank, according to the group's chairman Michael Kleiner (Gesher).

The front met with Finance Minister Yaakov Neeman yesterday and afterwards the MKs said they felt more certain about their likely opposition to the budget because of a failure to obtain added funding for Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Right-wing MKs are split on whether to link diplomatic developments with the budget. MKs Ze'ev Binyamin Begin, Ruby Rivlin, Uzi Landau (all Likud) and Kleiner, it is understood from Knesset sources, are pushing to the budget approval to an undertaking from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the size of the withdrawal. The NRP, however, is separating the two issues. "This is a special situation," said Kleiner, who chairs the Front. "There are leaks that the prime



MK Michael Kleiner (Arieh Jerolimski)

minister behind our back promised [US Secretary of State Madeleine] Albright, immediately after the budget's approval, to make a very big withdrawal. If this is the case and we don't receive a very firm commitment to the contrary, I believe we should vote against the budget."

The front's aim is to delay the budget's approval until March 31 next year. If there is no budget by April 1, the government automatically falls.

David Levy also spoke about the withdrawal yesterday during a demonstration outside the Knesset; he denied that he was the source that leaked rumors that Netanyahu and Albright have already reached agreement. Levy also warned that a small gesture will be insufficient in the eyes of the US and Palestinians.

"Some ministers in the government think a withdrawal of six percent or less will push forward the peace process," said Levy. "I know, as does the prime minister, that any withdrawal smaller than a two-digit number will not advance the process."

Driving examiners end strike

By DAVID RUDGE

Driving examiners yesterday decided to end their strike after Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy agreed to meet with them and hear their grievances.

The announcement was welcomed by driving instructors, who staged their own stoppage yesterday to protest the disruptions caused by the strike of the examiners.

The examiners are opposed to plans by the ministry to reorganize the system and set up private companies that would be responsible for all driving tests - practical and theory.

Under the present set-up, examiners are under contract to the ministry to carry out tests. There is, however, little supervision of the examiners, according to the ministry. The examiners, who have been campaigning

to reduce the number of tests per day and improve their work conditions, fear that their jobs might be endangered by the privatization proposals.

Before the strike, they had staged a slow-down, causing a backlog. The strike itself cancelled some 3,000 practical examinations and 5,000 theory tests.

Driving instructors, who staged slow-moving protest processions which held up traffic in many parts of the country, said they had been caught between the hammer and the anvil.

"We have been suffering from the ricochets from the strikes and industrial action of the examiners," said Shlomo Yosefsberg, head of the national association of driving examiners. "The students pay a lot of money for lessons

and then they don't get a return. Tests are postponed or delayed and they don't take more lessons. Then, if they fail, they have to pay for even more lessons and still their test is not on time.

"There have been occasions where students, under pressure and because of their frustration, have threatened instructors and there have even been some incidents. We can understand the students, but we are not the right address," said Yosefsberg.

He noted that driving instructors had their own reservations about the privatization plan, fearing it might lead to even more cases of bribery.

The spokesman for the Transport Ministry, however, said the aim of the privatization plan was to increase the number of examiners and improve supervision of their testing.

Knesset panel amends Detention Law

By BAT SHEVA TSUR

The Knesset Law Committee yesterday adopted a compromise draft amendment to the new Detention Law, thus averting a threat that large numbers of criminals could be released in a short time.

Under a formula proposed by committee chairman Shaul Yahalom (NRP), and approved by Supreme Court Chief Justice Aharon Barak, the law would permit the release of prisoners nine months after their trial begins.

Only a Supreme Court justice would have the jurisdiction to extend a suspect's detention for another three months beyond the nine-month limit.

If adopted by the plenum, the new amendment would replace paragraph 61 of the law which would have released detainees after six months.

Yahalom said the compromise would be satisfactory until further funds are found to speed up legal procedures. Before the new law it was possible to hold a suspect for up to a year, without the review of a justice.

SETTLEMENT

Continued from Page 2

"The American pressure is neither just nor moral, and certainly far from giving answers to the people in Zion," he continued. He alleged that his wife and son's murderers were "running around free in Ramallah."

Israel has unsuccessfully sought the extradition of three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who were convicted of the shooting by a Palestinian court in Jericho.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's communications adviser, David Bar-Ilan, dismissed the Beit-El construction plans as "nothing new," saying that the activity has been going on for the past year.

"They're building a few houses in Beit El," he said. But he rejected the notion that this was tantamount to spinning Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's call for a "time-out" in settlement activity.

Bar-Ilan contended that the Beit El project merely was meant "to satisfy the requirements of natural growth."

He stressed that he was referring not to childbirth, but a normal movement of people from one residence to another.

"There is a queue a mile long consisting of people who want to live in Beit El," he said. "As long as it meets the municipal requirements of the area there is no reason for concern."

Bar-Ilan also described the establishment of a Nahal settlement south of Hebron as a military operation outside the scope of the Oslo Accords.

Margot Dudkevitch and Mohammed Najib add: Palestinians and left-wing groups sharply criticized the plans to add housing in Beit El and to double the size of Nisanit in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian Legislative Council member Sanah Ta'anni charged that an Israeli being killed did not justify settlement construction.

"More than one Palestinian has been killed by Israelis," he said. "The West Bank, including Jerusalem, are occupied areas and the settlements' existence are illegal. It is obvious that Israel's mind is not on peace."

PA Chairman Yasser Arafat's adviser Ahmed Tibi charged that the construction would hamper diplomacy.

"Maybe this is a message for US President Bill Clinton before the next meeting with Israel takes place," added Arafat's spokesman, Marwan Kanfani.

The left-wing Gush Shalom organization sent a cable to Mordechai protesting the planned construction in Beit El, and his plans to attend the ceremony next week.

Peace Now charged, meanwhile, that the Israel Lands Administration has published a tender for construction of 100 housing units in Nisanit, in addition to a tender for 25 units published earlier this month, which would double the settlement's size.

CONVERSION

Continued from Page 1

It was a petition to the High Court of Justice by some of these parents, who wanted their children's conversions to be recognized, which precipitated the dispute which the Neeman Committee has tried to resolve.

Hammer stressed that the subcommittee agreement was unrelated to the issue of whether Conservative or Reform converts would be recognized in Israel, but he said it was an important step with regard to the Chief Rabbinate's position on adopted children. He added that it was in the children's interest to undergo a conversion that

would be recognized by all sectors in Israel.

He added that this agreement had been relatively simple to reach because it does not involve relations between the Chief Rabbinate and the Reform and Conservative movements and because of tremendous public pressure to solve the issue of the adopted children.

"It is sad that it took our court case to make them do it, to apply halacha in a lenient manner, under consideration of the circumstances," Hammer said.

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Women get IAF combat roles

By **ARIEH O'SULLIVAN**

First the Israel Air Force let women participate in pilots' courses. Now it has opened the door to combat duty for female soldiers and will also permit them to be assigned to anti-aircraft batteries.

The catch: they must do reserve duty until the age of 34. According to the latest issue of *Air Force Magazine*, some 30 female recruits are slated to participate in next summer's anti-aircraft defense course.

Those who pass will be assigned to Patriot and Hawk missile batteries. Such batteries are usually stationary and far from a war front. The mobile Chaparral missile and other anti-aircraft units are still closed to women, the magazine said.

"Girls should be treated no differently than boys and if they can go to the pilots' course there is no reason not to integrate them in the anti-aircraft units," Brig.-Gen. Gilad Ramot, air defense commander, was quoted as saying.

Women recruits will be required to undergo basic combat training, but in a separate platoon from the men. The demands will be identical to those of the combat course that men go through and will include weapons training and combat maneuvers. Some physical demands may be modified, however, the magazine said.

Col. Adi Bershtetzi, head of the IAF planning branch, said women who volunteer for service at anti-aircraft batteries will be required to serve until they are 34. He also said women who want to become officers will have to do an extra three years of duty, "just like the boys."

First Russian immigrant passes IAF pilots' course

By **ARIEH O'SULLIVAN**

For the first time in the history of the IAF, a Russian-born immigrant has passed the strenuous pilots' course. Lt. Zohar, who came to Israel at the age of 11 from Gomel was following in the footsteps of his grandfather, who was a fighter pilot in the Red Army 60 years ago.

According to the *Air Force Magazine*, Lt. Zohar has been designated a fighter jet navigator. "I always wanted to get to the pilots' course, but I thought that it was only a dream," he was quoted as saying.

The magazine also published a demographic breakdown of course graduates, which showed that the average cadet had parents who were teachers or engineers, about two siblings and grew up in the Sharon area.

According to *Air Force* statistics, 66 percent of the December class are from cities, 18% are from moshavim and 16% are from kibbutzim.

It said that 4% are religious and 23% are farmers. Herzliya provides the most cadets, followed by Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Kfar Saba.

Pilgrims bring to Bethlehem Christmas joy, but no cash

News agencies

Bethlehem's Manger Square was jammed with Palestinian revellers and hundreds of foreigners, mainly Filipino tourists and Romanian workers making a pilgrimage on Christmas Eve to the grotto where Jesus was believed to be born.

"We dreamed of being here all our lives," said Filipina Amenia Ribo Wednesday night, adding that the scores of Palestinian Authority policemen bristling with automatic weapons didn't square with her image of biblical Bethlehem. "When you read the Bible about where Jesus was born, it's different. But we don't care about the machine guns."

As night fell, youths set off a brief flurry of fireworks and choirs from the US and Latin America performed.

The sixth-century Church of the Nativity was bathed in a pale blue glow and crowned with a neon Christmas star as some 5,000 Moslem and Christian Palestinians - mainly young men - meandered through the square below.

Christmas Day dawned clear and calm yesterday, in contrast to the crowds and fireworks of the night before. A boys choir sang at morning Mass at the Church of the Nativity, built above the grotto where Jesus is believed to have been born. Pilgrims bundled against the morning chill lit candles and kissed the silver star on the traditional spot of Jesus' manger.

In Manger Square, workers mopped sidewalks and picked up litter from Christmas Eve.

Though Palestinian merry-makers had thronged Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, it was a decidedly local affair as tourists and pilgrims mainly stayed away. Shopkeepers and souvenir hawkers, who had hoped Christmas would bring better business, said they were disappointed.

"These Romanians can't buy anything," said a hawkier of crosses. "Look at them - they're worse off than we are."

A shopkeeper at one of Manger Square's stores selling nativity scenes and trinkets was equally glum. "Over past Christmases, you wouldn't have three minutes to stop. Now I'm standing here talking to you," he said.

Manger Square merchant



Children reach out to receive candies from Kari Rantila, a headmaster from Sippola, Finland, dressed as Santa Claus, in Manger Square on Christmas Eve.

Michel Abu Aita said tourism this Christmas, Bethlehem's third under Palestinian self-rule, was disastrous. "In the time of Israel, Christmas was a more religious occasion. There were more foreigners and [Christian] Israeli Arabs here, even Jews. Now they don't come," Abu Aita said. "Today, Christmas is more like a nationalist party. Moslems from all the surrounding villages come to the square on Christmas Eve."

"But the problem is that we need a nationalist festival. The people need a chance to celebrate while free of Israeli rule," Nadia Hazban said. "The homeland is worth more than money."

This year's celebrations were intended to have a religious and not political air. Pictures of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat and Palestinian flags were removed from the square and Moslem youths were kept away.

However, Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the top Roman

Catholic clergyman in the region, brought up politics in his traditional sermon at midnight mass. Sabbah decried the difficulties in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and urged Arafat to be "wise and courageous."

Sabbah's arrival was delayed for 90 minutes because the IDF sealed off the Jerusalem-Bethlehem road for two hours and dispatched sappers to defuse what the army said was a "simulated bomb" of wires attached to a gas tank.

"In the Palestinian territories and in this city of Bethlehem the sufferings of the people are growing," said Sabbah, who wore a flowing white robe with red and gold embroidery. "Peace is stumbling... We hope [this] does not lead to new violence."

"Only wise and courageous administration by the Palestinian Authority can sustain the patience and hope in those who are waiting for a better future," he said in the mass attended by Arafat.

Arafat told worshippers at an Anglican service held in a courtyard near the Church of the Nativity that "there will be peace in the land."

But just hours before Sabbah and Arafat appealed to Moslems, Christians and Jews to walk together toward peace, Arafat's Christian-born wife Suha and Tourism Minister Moshe Katsav exchanged barbs through the media. Suha Arafat accused Israel of barring Christian access to Bethlehem.

"It is... an attempt to stop the celebrations and to destroy the Palestinian dream," she said. "Every year we try to make the celebrations better, but every year Israel tries to destroy our efforts."

Katsav shot back with a statement declaring the city open to all tourists and pilgrims. "I am sorry the wife of Arafat is making cynical political use of incorrect facts on the most important Christian holiday," Katsav said in the statement.

Court finds for 'Dakar' author

But judge does not lift ban on book

By **BATSHEVA TSUR**

A former naval officer whose book was removed from bookshops on security grounds was not obliged to present the manuscript to the Ministerial Committee on Publications, the Tel Aviv District Court ruled yesterday.

Judge Hila Gerstel also ordered the state to pay Col. (Res.) Michael Eldar the sum of NIS 4,000 plus VAT for damages.

The controversial book, "Dakar and the Story of the Submarine Division," will still not be made available to the public, as the court did not lift a ban on its sale.

But it told the state for a third time that it would have to provide a new charge sheet.

Eldar's book on the submarine *Dakar* which went missing in the Mediterranean in 1968, appeared on the bookshelves on September 18, but was removed by court order the very same day on grounds of security.

Police raided Eldar's house, confiscated his passport, computer and files which they said he

was holding illegally and charged him with "aggravated espionage."

Eldar said yesterday that all information in his book had come from journalistic research done over the past 12 years since he retired from active service.

"The military censor approved the book for publication but the chief of field security is in favor of the ban," Eldar said. "If the issue comes up in court again, which of the two officers will the prosecutor support?"

Human rights groups have appealed for the criminal charges to be removed and the ban lifted.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has twice sent letters of protest to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, accusing Israel of contravening the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, in a letter to Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein, also protested the harassment of Eldar and violation of his right to free speech.

Man who lost fingers has three restored

By **JUDY SIEGEL**

A 49-year-old Russian immigrant whose 10 fingers had to be amputated three years ago in Siberia due to frostbite now has three new fingers on his right hand and hopes soon to have others on the left.

The unusual finger-restoration procedure, performed for the first time in Israel, involved halving three finger "roots" and drawing them out gradually over a period of two months.

It was performed at Haifa's Bnai Zion Hospital by Dr. Aharon Liebersohn, a leading expert on the hands and feet, and presented yesterday at a medical meeting at the hospital's joint transplant center headed by Prof. David Mendes.

Also at the conference were two women who with deformed toes that the doctors had managed to straighten.

Michael Pinzor, a TV technician, was told by Russian doctors

after he suffered frostbite that all his fingers would drop off if they weren't surgically removed.

After the amputations, he became a bitter man and was unable to work: he performed what few tasks he could with his feet.

After coming on aliya, he turned to experts at the Haifa hospital and asked to undergo joint transplantations. Liebersohn decided instead to try to "grow" several fingers on each hand out of the finger roots embedded inside his palm.

After halving the finger roots, which were a few centimeters long, he started to pull them out, bit by bit, every day.

After two months, the patient had three fingers that became healthy and strong.

Yesterday, Pinzor demonstrated his ability to hold and drink from a mug of beer, write and even shave himself using his three fingers.

Reservists: Habad distributing propaganda during Hanukka visits

By **ARIEH O'SULLIVAN**

Reserve soldiers serving at IDF positions along the Lebanese border have complained that uninvited Habad "mitzvah tanks" have been handing out political propaganda during their Hanukka visits.

MK Ophir Pines (Labor) has complained to Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai that Habad's visits to IDF bases are against regulations and asked for them to be halted.

"They have been brazenly handing out flyers vehemently oppos-

ing the peace process and the second redeployment in the territories," Pines said.

He added that the Habad activists refused requests by the reserve soldiers to leave the position and let them get on with celebrating the holiday without them.

Pines called on Mordechai to instruct the IDF to enforce the ban on Habad visits to bases during Hanukka.

"This attempt to carry out gross political propaganda among IDF soldiers needs to be purged and those responsible for allowing it

should be punished," Pines said.

Habad spokesman Menachem Brodzy flatly denied the charges, saying that the Habad "tanks" were allowed to visit IDF bases and were doing so under the supervision of the IDF chief chaplain.

"On Hanukka we go to the bases and hand out doughnuts and light the menorah and that is all," Brodzy said.

"There is no distribution of any flyers."

Brodzy said that if any flyers were handed out it was against Habad instructions.



Devoted grandparents

Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon and his wife Ludmilla (right) spend a Hanukka afternoon with their grandchildren, playing with Lego at the Jerusalem Mall.

(Tzamtam)

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NEWS

in brief

Israel Aircraft Industries flies new business jet

Israel Aircraft Industries carried out the maiden flight of a new corporate jet produced with American partners, the company said yesterday.

IAI expects to receive full certification for the aircraft from the US Federal Aviation Commission in about a year, the statement said.

The Galaxy will be built in Israel and customized at the Alliance Airport in Fort Worth, Texas.

Touted as the only jet in its price range that can routinely fly across the Atlantic, the Galaxy can be customized to accommodate up to 19 passengers and will sell for about \$14.5 million. AP

Bridge disaster trial scheduled for January 20

The trial of five officials charged with causing death by negligence in the July 14 Maccabiah bridge collapse, which killed four Australian athletes, is to start on January 20 in Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court. The case will be heard by a three-judge panel headed by the court's vice president, Judge Edna Beckenstein.

The suspects, who were charged Monday, are Dr. Micha Bar-Ilan, the engineer who designed the bridge; contractors Baruch Karagula and Yehoshua Ben-Ezra; Yoram Eyal, the head of the organizing committee; and Adam Mishori, director of the Irqunit company which provided materials for the bridge. *Itim*

Groups demand better rail service

A coalition of groups, representing ecological concerns, accident prevention and municipalities, are to demonstrate opposite the Prime Minister's Office today at 11 a.m. to call for greater investment in Israel Railways and in the Tel Aviv area light railway. According to those organizing the rally, the 1988 budget, which is about to be approved, makes no provision for the need for mass transit in Israel, thus resulting not only in traffic jams and the consequent loss of thousands of hours of work, but also in road accidents with death and injuries. *Haim Shapiro*

Process set for claims by swindled immigrants

The arbitration committee set up by the cabinet to adjudicate compensation claims by immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who were swindled out of their money on their way to Israel, Wednesday issued procedures for making claims. The procedures and explanations are available at the committee's Tel Aviv office, the Justice Ministry announced. The deadline for claiming compensation is January 29, 1998. *Jerusalem Post Staff*

Army opens firing zones for Hanukka tours

The IDF has opened a number of firing zones in the Negev to the public for touring during Hanukka, allowing access to some exciting sites that are off-limits through most of the year. The army said, however, that all tours in the firing zones must be coordinated first with the Society for the Protection of Nature and that private hiking will not be allowed. The sites being opened include the Negev mountain range, Shifra, Mt. Karkum and the desert regions around Sde Boker. More information about coordinating tours can be obtained from the SPNI at (07)-623-8527 and (07)-627-9258. *Arieh O'Sullivan*

The unveiling of the tombstone of our beloved

SAM TASSAL

will take place on Wednesday, December 31, 1997 at the Netanya cemetery in Shikun Vatikim. We will meet at the entrance at 15:00. Transportation available, 85 Smlansky St., Netanya at 14:30. *Grace Tassal*

The unveiling of the tombstone of the late

BELLA SEBBA

will take place on Sunday, December 28 at 3 p.m. at the Tel Mond Cemetery. *The Family*

Our beloved

BESS HERMAN

has passed away.

The funeral will leave from the Beit Hasped, opposite the Herzog Hospital, Jerusalem, today, Friday, December 26, 1997 (27 Kislev 5758) at 10:30 a.m. *The Family*

Shiva at the home of her son, Joseph Herman, 24 Rehov Megadim, Jerusalem.

On the 2nd Yahrzeit of the passing of my dear husband, our father

ARTHUR HARRISON LOW

We will visit his grave on Friday, January 2, 4 Tevet. Meeting place: the entrance to Nahlat Yitzhak Cemetery at 11 a.m. *Dalia, Shirley and Adam Low*

The Trustees and Staff of THE AVI CHAI FOUNDATION and Tzav Pius extend heartfelt condolences to Dani Danieli and family on the passing of his mother

MATILDA DANIELI

Chief rabbis won't meet Reform heads

By HAIM SHAPIRO

In a move which could prove to be the death blow to the Neeman Committee, the Chief Rabbinate this week told the Reform movement that the chief rabbis could only meet with Reform leaders if the latter accepted a series of principles, including faith that the Torah is God-given.

The demand came in the form of a letter from Gedalya Schreiber, director-general of the Chief Rabbinate, to Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform Movement's Israel Religious Action Center.

The letter was in answer to one Regev sent at the beginning of the month, asking the chief rabbis to meet with Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, who has come to Israel as head of the delegation of the American Reform Zionist Organization (ARZA), to the Zionist Congress.

"Because to the sorrow of the chief rabbis you have distanced yourselves in your opinions to the point of disdain for and infringement of the basic concepts of the Torah and Judaism, the chief rabbis cannot meet with you to discuss matters pertaining to the reli-

gion of Israel," said the letter, addressed to "attorney Uri Regev."

The letter called for a statement renouncing recognition of patrilineal descent for Jews, mixed marriages, homosexual marriage ceremonies, of remarriage without a proper get (Jewish divorce), and of conversion without circumcision, immersion, and the acceptance of mitzvot and faith in the Jewish religion. Finally it called for acceptance of the divine origin of the Torah.

"One must accept the foundation of faith that the Torah is from Heaven and one cannot treat its

rules lightly and bend them to the will of anyone," the letter said.

At a press conference earlier this week, Yoffie had expressed his pessimism in the ability of the Neeman Committee to reach a compromise, since the chief rabbis, whose cooperation would be needed for such a compromise, would not even meet with the Reform.

However, Yoffie also said that the American Reform movement would be unwilling to make any concessions, such as abandoning recognition of patrilineal descent, or forbidding its rabbis to perform mixed marriages.

Yoffie said that such moves were irrelevant since it was the Israel Reform movement which would be working within the framework of the Neeman Committee agreement and the Israel movement did not recognize patrilineal descent or allow its rabbis to perform mixed marriages.

In response to the letter, Rabbi Arnie Hirsch, director of ARZA, said the letter highlighted the fundamental problem with the Neeman Committee and the Reform movement's pessimism concerning the work of the committee.

Burg makes last-minute proposal for unity

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

In an effort to end the 33rd Zionist Congress on a note of unity, World Zionist Organization Chairman Avraham Burg was trying to gain approval last night for a compromise proposal regarding pluralism and the conversion bill. Earlier resolutions by representatives of the various streams within world Jewry touched off heated debate and failed to win approval.

Just before press time, it appeared that the Mizrahi delegation was leaning towards rejecting Burg's compromise, possibly setting up a scenario where either the original proposals made by the Reform and Conservative or Burg's compromise would pass despite Mizrahi's opposition, but leaving the Congress seriously divided at its close.

The final makeup of the Zionist Executive was also still not known late last night due to internal wrangling within the Likud over the position of Jewish Agency treasurer.

Burg's compromise proposal would have had the Congress "recognize the fact that a) In a democratic society, expressions of Judaism will be diverse; b) Observant and secular Jews of all streams have the equal democratic right to maintain their beliefs and lifestyles in their own way; and c) attempts by any body to impose religion or prevent its observance by the other side is anti-democratic and liable to undermine respect for Judaism."

Burg's proposal also said the Congress, "out of deep concern for the unity of the Jewish people, calls on the leadership of the religious streams of Judaism in Israel and the Diaspora to cooperate with the Israeli government to guarantee the success of the Neeman Committee in its efforts to solve the painful questions on the Jewish people's agenda, including those regarding personal status and the ability to act in Israel."

Meanwhile, a Jewish Agency source said the Likud was still trying to decide just who would be its nominee for the position of Jewish Agency treasurer. The source said that Burg was not pleased with the prospect of having Salai Meridor, who is to replace him in two years, serve in the meantime as treasurer, believing Meridor might block some of his plans. Some individuals in the Likud were therefore considering Nicky Capeluto, an immigrant from South Africa.



Hanukka run

Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball star Oded Katash begins the 53rd annual Hanukka torch run yesterday after receiving the torch from Maccabi Health Fund head Shabtai Shavit in Modi'in yesterday. The Maccabi World Union and the Maccabi youth organization sponsor the run.

Rubinstein: Malls to remain shut on Shabbat

By BAT SHEVA TSUR

Attorney-General Elyakim Rubinstein plans to enforce the law forbidding work on Shabbat and to keep out-of-town malls and shopping centers in kibbutzim closed on Saturdays.

"If you don't enforce the law with a kibbutz or a shopping mall, the other store-owners are punished twice: they can't open on Saturdays and they lose the customers that would have come in the middle of the week," Rubinstein said yesterday.

He noted that a large section of the public was opposed to shopping on Shabbat and that the attorney-general had to try to maintain a balance, "although it is not possible to please

everyone."

Those interested in keeping stores open on Shabbat would have to get the Knesset to pass new legislation, Rubinstein said.

On another issue, Rubinstein said he would continue investigations into alleged abuses by public officials despite a spate of acquittals recently of politicians tried on corruption charges.

"If there are charges, these have to be investigated. It is our duty to see whether there is evidence and whether the charges are of interest to the public," Rubinstein said.

He also said that a decision was expected in a few days about the case of Moleket MK Benny Elon. Elon was charged with other

members of the Zo Artzenu ultra-nationalists in 1995, but the charges were suspended when he won a seat in the Knesset last year.

Two other group members were convicted of sedition in September.

Rubinstein also expressed "deep regret" that legal ties with the Palestinian Authority were "virtually non-existent."

He said such ties were vital for humanitarian and ethical reasons, and that it was particularly painful to see convicted murderers given asylum or tried hastily by a Palestinian court and then released.

"The Justice Minister and I have done our utmost to normalize legal relations" with the Palestinians, he added.

Hanukka drive aims to increase number of organ donors

By JUDY SIEGEL

The list of individuals who agree to be potential organ donors is seven times longer today than it was three years ago, but the percentage of the population that has joined remains one of the lowest in the world.

The Health Ministry, Israel Transplant and the Rotary Clubs have organized a Hanukka campaign to increase the number of

potential donors by getting them to sign Adi cards.

Adi was established as a voluntary organization about two decades ago by a family whose son died for the lack of a donated kidney. Some 2,000 Rotary volunteers will man dozens of Adi booths during Hanukka.

Some 115,000 Israelis - or about 2% of the population - are registered as potential organ donors. In many other Western countries, 15%-30% of citizens

are registered; in Saudi Arabia, 15% of the population have registered as potential donors.

In 1995, the average number of new names on the Adi list per month was 380, while today the figure is 2,600. During the whole of 1997, 28,208 people signed up with Adi. Forms are automatically distributed with driver's license renewals or one can obtain them from Adi at (03)-9376950.

Currently, 1,050 Israelis are

waiting for a transplant due to the shortage of organs. During the past week, 12 people received organs from three donors; they made possible five kidney transplants, one kidney-pancreas transplant, three liver, one heart and two lung transplants.

There are only eight Israeli donors per million residents each year, compared to 27 per million in Spain, 22 in the US and 18 in France.



Jubilee stamp

The official stamp marking Israel's jubilee, which was issued this week, features the figure of Srulik, the archetypical Israeli boy with a kova tembel and sandals. The always-young Srulik was first designed in the Fifties by political cartoonist Kariel Gardosh ("Dosh"). Srulik had originally been chosen to represent Israel for the tenth anniversary of Israel's independence. "Despite all our achievements and troubles, our mentality is still that of teenagers - feeling strong and weak at the same time, with extreme bouts of enthusiasm and fits of depression, wavering between self-confidence and utter dejection, longing for love," says the Hungarian-born Dosh. *(Text: Judy Siegel)*

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Prof. Uriel Simon, Dept. of Bible
- Jan. 18
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Dr. Meir Bar-Ilan, Dept. of Jewish History
- Jan. 25
Student Symposium: The Jewish Encounter with the Academic World
- March 1
Secularism, Religion and the State of Israel
Prof. Ella Belfer, Dean of Students
- March 8
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Mr. David Moss, Artist

- March 15
Women as Jewish Religious Authorities and Leaders
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- March 22
Religious and Secular Jews
Prof. Charles Liebman, Dept. of Political Science
- April 26
Judaism and the Arts
Prof. Daniel Sperber, Dept. of Talmud
- May 3
Orthodoxy and Journalism
Mr. David Makovsky, Diplomatic Correspondent, Ha'arets
- May 10
The Portrayal of Orthodoxy in Modern Novels
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- May 17
Symposium: Torah and Secular Culture Towards the Twenty-First Century
Moderator: Prof. Ella Belfer, Dean of Students

All lectures will take place at 6 p.m. in the School of Education Building, Room 008 (lower level). For more information, contact Rabbi Adam Ferziger, Seminar Coordinator, (03) 531-8653.

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Khatami's Iran rehabilitates fun

By JOHN DANISZEWSKI

TEHERAN — As a director making movies about women in Iran, Tahmineh Milani was not exactly popular at the stratified Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Her last film never made it into theaters because it showed an 8-year-old girl who wasn't wearing a hijab, the Islamic head covering.

After that, she was prevented from making another film by a ministry bureaucracy packed with former Revolutionary Guards who, she says ruefully, loved only war movies.

But Milani persisted, going regularly to the ministry's film department to argue for her latest script, *Two Women*. Last month, after four years of waiting, she received an unexpected reply: "No problem."

She credits Iran's new president, Mohammed Khatami.

Thanks to him, Iran is becoming more open and exciting. Fun, even.

"We think there will be a lot of things coming," said 20-year-old Mitra, a young woman whose life reflects a generation's frustration at living in a theocracy. She believes she was named down for study by the education faculty at her university because her instructors did not find her style sufficiently Islamic: a long coat and scarf with blue jeans peeking out instead of the full-length black cloak known as the chador.

"We picked him to relax things," Mitra said of the president. Her friend Gaelarch, a 17-year-

old starting college, agreed.

"Khatami gets into our hearts, and he sees the society in a more open way," she said.

When the soft-spoken cleric took office in August, he ushered in a new era.

Based on a series of interviews conducted earlier this month with a cross section of Iranians — including students, intellectuals, workers, businesspeople and government officials — a picture begins to emerge of this era, the most important turning point in this country of 60 million people since Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was toppled from power in 1979.

In these dawning days of Khatami, Iranians feel more confident and freer to speak their minds.

They have more daring choices at movie theaters and in bookstores. (One movie that has sparked a scandal, and long lines, is *The Snowman*, in which an Iranian is so desperate for a visa to the US that he disguises himself as a woman.)

Their new national soccer coach cares more about winning games than about taking his players to prayers. Nongovernmental organizations agitate about human rights.

And the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has discovered the World Wide Web.

Reversing the Islamic Revolution is not uppermost on people's minds, but reform is — making the country's institutions accountable and law-abiding, ending abuses of privacy and individual rights and breaking down bar-

riers between Iran and the rest of the world, including the US.

"What happened during the election showed that people are tired of all this stuff," Milani said.

In Khatami, a huge and restive younger generation of Iranians has found its icon of change.

And the younger generation in turn provides Khatami with his political strength, because his opponents know that he has the overwhelming majority of the people — 20 million voters — behind him.

But questions still abound: What will happen if Khatami goes too far in challenging the conservative religious establishment represented by the country's supreme leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei?

Figuring out Khatami and his presidency has become the issue du jour inside Iran. It also has risen to the top of the foreign policy agenda in Western capitals, including Washington, where US President Bill Clinton is weighing how warmly to respond to Khatami's direct overtures to dialogue.

Just as Khatami has taken a risk by speaking publicly in favor of contacts with America after nearly two decades of enmity, America must decide if it is worth taking a chance on him.

Some are urging the US not to be taken in, suggesting that Khatami is merely pretty window-dressing on an ugly regime, a decoy meant to get the West to ease up on Iran.

But there is also a risk that by being too cautious, the US could undercut Khatami.

"They [Iran's conservatives] are waiting for one mistake to pull him down," said one businessman from a prominent family who admires Khatami.

Until early this year, Khatami was a relatively obscure former minister of culture and Islamic guidance with religious credentials orthodox enough to get him past the screening of the arch-conservative Council of Guardians — an advisory council for the supreme leader — and onto May's presidential ballot.

But through some alchemy, this demure figure in a black turban was able to telegraph to the electorate that he stood for everything that the country's austere ruling mullahs did not. The people, particularly the young, awarded him 70 percent of the vote in a four-person race, the largest margin for any candidate since the revolution.

"Khatami's election victory was an avalanche. No one, not even the most optimistic in Khatami's election campaign, believed he could have such a huge success," marveled Iranian political historian Sadiq Zibakalam. "Since Khatami's election, there has been a lot of soul-searching among many Iranians over what happened."

"After the election, we can feel that the Iranian nation has no more fear," said Ali J. Dehbashi, editor in chief of *Kelik*, an arts and culture review. "They dropped their fear and are thinking that they can affect their own fate. If you see something beneath the surface, it is because of this self-confidence. This is something new."

(Los Angeles Times)



Midnight mass in Beijing
Catholic Bishop Fu Tianshan (center), joins hands with Father Francis Xavier (right) and an unidentified clergyman while conducting midnight mass at Beijing's Nan Tang Cathedral yesterday. Catholics are a small minority in China, which is officially an atheist state. (AP)

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Pushing 50 and looking great

The State of Israel's 50th anniversary celebrations were officially launched this week with the lighting of the first Hanukka candle at Beit Hanassi. Though the ceremony was a modest one, it was given some grandeur with the parallel Hanukka lightings by 33 world leaders across the globe.

Of these, the most symbolic was the candle lit by the president of Italy under Rome's Arch of Titus, which commemorates the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. The message of all these candles was a quietly triumphant one: After 2,000 years of exile and half-a-century of modern-era independence, the state of Israel is an accepted member among the family of nations.

And yet in Israel itself the festive atmosphere one might have expected to feel this year is conspicuously absent.

It is not just the tribulations of the organizing committee or the current sense of being in the economic and political doldrums that is making it difficult for Israelis to get into a celebratory mood. Israel is, as author Amos Oz put it in an interview with the BBC, "a dream come true," with the problem being that "the only way to preserve dreams untarnished is never to fulfill them."

It is perhaps human nature to focus on the tarnish, while forgetting the almost miraculous fulfillment of the dream itself. It is not easy to marvel at the resurrection of the Jewish state after two millennia while waiting for a bus, a job, or on hold, or guarding some outpost in the middle of nowhere.

This last aspect — the fact that after 50 years the struggle for survival is not yet behind us — is perhaps the most difficult to assimilate.

Each generation, starting with the nation's founders, was sure that by the time their children were grown, they would not have to face the threat of war and risk their lives defending their country. Each generation was disappointed, and even now it is too soon to know whether the "peace" process will actually lead to peace, to another war, or simply be an endless loop. At best, it will be a peace that for many years will require us to continue to devote precious resources and years of young lives to deterring those who still dream of destroying Israel.

Even so, our overall condition does not warrant the kind of gloom we are witnessing these days. Israel, despite living from its moment of birth in a hostile neighborhood, has never been more secure, established, and successful than it is today. This should be a source of pride and satisfaction — and yes, even celebration.

At the same time, there is nothing wrong with approaching this anniversary in a more contemplative vein, as a nation that is still finding its way.

The early Zionists, after all, assumed that a Jewish state, besides being a refuge for the Jewish people, would make a unique contribution to the world. As Theodor Herzl concluded in *The Jewish State* (1896), "The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness. And whatever we attempt there for our own benefit will redound mightily and beneficially to the good of all mankind."

These Zionists probably never imagined that, 50 years after its founding, Israel would still be preoccupied with existential questions of peace, security, and permanent borders.

Despite this, Israel has some inspirational accomplishments to its name, and not just in the military arena. The Jewish state has absorbed (and in some cases actively rescuing) millions of Jewish refugees from war-torn Europe, the Arab world, the former Soviet bloc and from Ethiopia; it has a high-tech industry which is both a golden goose and the envy of scores of nations; its farming techniques are implemented worldwide; and its democratic institutions are solid, vibrant and effective, peculiar though they may seem in a generally autocratic Middle East.

Though we often think of ourselves as a very divided society, the degree to which people from so many disparate cultures have jelled within the same small country is itself a remarkable achievement. It is right and healthy to celebrate now, despite the fact there is much left to do.

At 50, Israel may be reaching the end of its survivalist phase, both in the sense of a necessary obsession with defense and of being a refuge for threatened Jewish communities. It is as good a time as any to pause and to celebrate, and to set our sights beyond survival toward what we are surviving for.



The new robber barons

GERALD M. STEINBERG

Labor unions were originally formed as a counterweight to the large, privately owned enterprises in Europe and North America during the industrial revolution. Exploiting their near monopoly on jobs and their political power, the early robber barons of capitalism kept their employees working on assembly lines or building railroads for 16 hours a day in slave-like conditions. The owners made millions while the workers received a few pennies an hour.

In those days, there were no social benefits or legal limits on child labor. In this environment, the creation of unions served as a countervailing power against the wealthy owners, eventually establishing a balance between supply and demand in the labor market.

In Israel, the number of robber barons controlling industrial complexes and sweat shops, and making millions in profits at the expense of the working class, is close to zero. As a result, the power of the Histadrut (the General Labor Federation) to shut down the country with strikes is entirely inconsistent with the fundamental purpose of a labor union.

In fact, the Histadrut is a caricature of the model of a labor federation, a Golem that has turned on its supposed beneficiaries and is systematically exploiting them while serving a small upper class. In Israel, the largest employers and firms, such as Israel Aircraft Industries, El Al and the Israel Electric Corporation are state-owned, and seldom generate real profits.

As a result, the purpose of strikes against government firms cannot be a redistribution of prof-

its between owners and workers. Instead, the objective of these strikes is to protect the salaries and privileges of the public sector elite, at the expense of the middle and lower classes who are forced to pay the bills.

At the same time, the Histadrut has almost no role in the growing and profitable Israeli private sector.

have been overtaken by production in Asia, Jordan and Egypt, where the cost of labor is much lower. Instead of encouraging workers to adapt to new technology and conditions, the Histadrut's recipe of violent displays of anger have no positive impact on efforts to reduce unemployment.

Behind its workers-rights rhetoric the Histadrut serves the interests of a public-sector elite which at the end of the day abuses the workers

The most successful private firms are in high tech, where the employees do not need or want interference of unions. In this sector, workers are free to switch from firm to firm, and there is enough competition to ensure a competitive employment market. In many cases, the employees also own shares in the firms, and any profits are widely distributed. In this environment, unions simply get in the way.

In the recent wave of strikes people in the private sector who are not members of the Histadrut and could not get their products to markets or travel to meet clients, lost the most, without benefiting from the strike. For them, the Histadrut is the enemy. In the remaining low-tech and labor intensive industries, primarily located in development towns, workers' committees simply block innovation and flexibility.

Without the ability to adapt and change, the textile firms

Behind the rhetoric of workers' rights, the Histadrut serves the interests of the elite. For a long time, this pseudo-labor federation was a tool of the Labor Party and its allies. Membership dues supported political activities, and its political power was used to direct public funds to favorite groups. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Histadrut was one of the main reasons for economic stagnation, directing resources to non-productive sectors and privileged elites.

Today's "New Histadrut" is still under the control of the highest-paid government employees, who exploit their monopolistic power to promote their own interests. Tens of thousands of upper-echelon workers from IAI, IEC, El Al, government ministries, and municipalities already receive wage and benefit packages, including pensions, at a level triple the national average. In order to protect these benefits

from the market pressures as a result of privatization and competition, these privileged few are prepared — and have indeed managed — to shut down the country, holding the rest of us hostage to their demands.

These workers' committees have become the latter day Israeli robber barons, exploiting their monopolies and power to extract profits from the rest of the country. The money for the fat pay packets and pensions of the privileged class of government employees comes from Israeli taxpayers, including underpaid teachers, secretaries, nurses and other hospital employees, and even textile workers in Ofakim and Kiryat Shemona. If the billions of shekels forced out of the Treasury to pay for pensions could be saved, there would be more money for investment and for the creation of jobs.

In order to break the cycle and power of this elite, it is necessary to privatize the large government firms, introducing competition, and subjecting the employees to the same market forces as all other less privileged workers. This will limit the power and role of the Histadrut, and reduce its ability to damage the economy. The process will be painful, and the present government, with its internal divisions and lack of leadership, may not be able to withstand the pressure of more strikes. But the process is inevitable, and the earlier this is done, the lower the long-term cost for the majority of Israelis.

The writer is a professor of political studies at Bar Ilan University and a senior researcher at the BESA Center for Strategic Studies.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ROAD SAFETY

Sir, — On behalf of Metuna, the organization fighting road carnage, may I congratulate Larry Derfner on his series of articles ("It's no accident," December 19 and onwards) on this subject. However I take exception to the use of the word "myth" in relation to the Israeli driver. Every day responsible drivers bear witness to the number of "near misses" through careless, selfish and reckless driving behavior. Who hasn't seen the constant lane-hopping or been nearly deafened by incessant honking or overtaken by speeding cars when

observing the maximum speed limit? It is true that these habits could be cured through greater deterrence and enforcement with no extra budget. However, if the police continue to regard road safety as a low-priority issue when the use of modern technology in other developed countries has been so successful, what can the public expect? Today the number of Israeli road deaths for every billion km. is twice and three times that of most European countries, many of who have equally serious problems and drunk driving.

As a country of high technological standards we should be ashamed that they do not translate into saving lives. The new national road safety authority has a daunting task ahead with more than 600 reported casualties already this year. Let us hope that they will learn from the failures of those who preceded them. We wish them luck.

IVAN POPE, Chairman, Metuna.

Netanya.

STRIP SEARCHES

Sir, — I thought it was bad enough when the guard tried to take my precious, super-natural wholehearted bread out of its bag with her dirty hands, but when the next guard — it was like we were on a conveyor belt — asked me to remove my hat... This horrendous experience happened this week at the "festive opening" of the World Likud convention, prior to the Prime Minister's and President's arrival. In a true democracy, the leaders

should follow the "voice" of the "people." If they feel that their lives are in danger that proves that they are too far removed from their "people." Agreed, there will always be serious, potential dangers, but the bad ones will easily find ways to do their damage. Disgracefully insulting procedures will not stop them. If our "leaders" and their guests truly want to travel safely in the streets, they should be driven in ordinary cars, about five years old,

of popular make, and their drivers and guards shouldn't have those tell-tale crew-cuts and state-of-the-art earphones. I refused to take off my hat in public; the female guard and I entered a nearby "Ladies Room" for the inspection. Next time, if I want to see Weizman or Bibi, I'll turn on the television.

BATYA MEDAD

Shiloh.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

65 years ago: On December 26, 1932, The Palestine Post reported a daring hold-up by brigands of a car traveling from Jerusalem to Amman. The Post had also reprinted a series of interesting and revealing letters written by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, describing his ambitious plans to restore our antiquities. The letters were published on the 10th anniversary of Ben-Yehuda's death.

A bomb was thrown at a No. 12 bus in Romema, injuring nine Jews. There were numerous other serious shooting incidents all over the town. Two Hagana guards were killed and six other Jews injured in shooting along the Tel Aviv-Jaffa border. Nine Jewish prisoners were wounded seriously when bombs were thrown into the yard of the Jaffa Prison during the recreation period. It was only after this outrage that the authorities decided to transfer all Jewish prisoners to Tel Aviv. The Tel Aviv Municipality provided alternative housing for over 500 Jewish families who had left the Jaffa border area. Many cases of arms confiscated from Jews were later found in the possession of Arabs. Izziddin esh-Shawa, Arab Higher Executive representative in London, expressed satisfaction with the increasing support the

Arab case was receiving in Britain. He said that this was a factor which greatly helped to "obliterate the mistakes committed by Britain in the past."

25 years ago: On December 26, 1972, The Jerusalem Post reported that a cold wave killed \$1.5 million worth of crops for export.

Of the 150 juvenile delinquents who were released from prison to join the army in the past 18 months about a half had adjusted well. But the other half didn't make it, and some were known to have returned to crime. Police Minister Shlomo Hillel announced.

A Jerusalem yeshiva student who yelled "Nazis get out" at police during a demonstration was sent to jail for four months by an angry judge in Jerusalem Magistrate's Court.

Alexander Zvielli

The EU challenges Jerusalem

MOSHE ZAK

European Union special emissary to the Middle East Miguel Moratinos was right to be alarmed. While on the one hand the Luxembourg declaration by the 13 leaders of the EU praised him for his efforts to advance the peace process in the Middle East, on the other hand it put spokes in his wheel.

The summit conference which met this month in Luxembourg published 13 guidelines for EU policy regarding the question of the Israeli-Arab negotiations, the majority of which were unbalanced and one-sided.

These guidelines, especially those touching on the question of Jerusalem, disqualify a priori the right of the EU to join the supervisory mechanism of the Israeli-Palestinian-American agreement for security collaboration.

Ambassador Moratinos was alarmed by an Israel Radio report that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was considering suspending talks with him on the peace process. He telephoned the Foreign Ministry in a panic requesting clarifications. Director-General Eitan Bentsur tried to calm him by saying that no personal insult was intended. It was doubtful whether this conversation mollified Ambassador Moratinos.

And one hopes not, since on the basis of the guidelines set out in the Luxembourg declaration the EU can not be part of Israeli-Arab negotiations. The notes of protest that Israel presented to the foreign ministers of the rotating Troika of the European Union leadership clarified that Israel cannot ignore direct European involvement in Jerusalem. The EU leaders did not merely express an opinion on controversial issues between Israel and the Palestinians, but also gloried in their active support of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem.

It was no coincidence that the paragraph declaring this support followed mention of the agreement between the EU and the PLO (specifically using the term "PLO" and not "Palestinian Authority"): "The EU stresses the need for the comprehensive implementation of the ECPLO

interim agreement, the EU will also enhance its support to the Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem."

The EU undoubtedly knew that a few days previously the Knesset had passed a law forbidding governmental or political activity by the Palestinian Authority in Jerusalem. The EU

ignore the limitations they had already agreed to.

The EU can claim that it does not recognize the unification of Jerusalem, but it is not entitled to oppose to Israeli laws.

Jerusalem is not a No Man's Land. No one can oppose the European investment promised.

Brussels is contravening Israeli law by its active support of Palestinian institutions in the capital

certainly knew that the Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement limited Palestinian governmental activity to the territories under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority. It also knew about the ongoing conflict between Israel and the PA regarding the activities of Orient House, but chose to ignore this. The declaration did not stop at expressing an opinion on the situation in Jerusalem but admitted that it supported (without any restrictive definitions) Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem.

This is tantamount to a European call to the Palestinians to break the law in Jerusalem and to violate the Israeli-Palestinian interim agreement.

On the eve of the Hebron agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinians transferred some of their offices from Jerusalem to Ramallah, since they understood that Israel would not redeploy its forces in Hebron unless the PA first closed its offices in Jerusalem.

Now the Europeans are promising the PA that they will support Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem. They have issued a blank check to Palestinian institutions with no limit on the authority or objective of the institution.

Unreserved support of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem could be understood by Arafat and Faisal Hussein as a sign from the Europeans to

to the Palestinian Authority for building an airport near Rafah or enlarging the port of Gaza. But general support of Palestinian institutions within Jerusalem is not just assistance, it is an activity which conflicts with sovereign rule in Jerusalem.

The European challenge to the Israeli government in Jerusalem can hardly be an inducement to Israel to agree to the inclusion of the EU in the committee supervising the implementation of the security agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. This European request is included in a document called *A Code of Conduct*, which the Union proposed to Israel and the Palestinians; it also appears in direct appeals to Israel and in the Luxembourg Declaration, which is an attempt to formalize the supervision of the implementation of the agreements by a committee in which the EU will be a partner.

In view of the Luxembourg Declaration, Israel can hardly find a reason to support this request which the European Council explained by an astonishing argument: "The European Council emphasize that the EU is a major economic partner of both Israel and the PA as well as the largest donor of financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority." It is a fact that the Europeans are the largest contributors to the PA, but to act as if Israel and the PA are on the same level of economic partnership is ridiculous.

It is a fact that Israel purchases almost twice from the European market as it sells to it, while The Palestinians receive only donations and investments from the Europeans.

At the UN General Assembly session which concluded this week, the Europeans, in an attempt to show that they are not one-sided, refused to vote for the Arab demand for Israeli withdrawal to the lines of June 4, 1967, instead proposing a withdrawal to the international border, which would push the Syrians back somewhat from the Sea of Galilee.

However, in the Luxembourg Declaration the Europeans proved that they are far from objective. It calls for reciprocity in implementing the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, but in the details of its demands, the EU does not mention unkept Palestinian commitments, the most outstanding of which is the commitment to cancel the anti-Israeli clauses in the Palestinian Covenant.

The commitment to reduce the Palestinian police force which has deviated from the agreed numbers, was not mentioned. The same goes for the commitment to cease the wild incitement against Israel. Even this month Arafat incited the Moslem world against Israel at the Teheran conference that the Jews want to destroy the Al-Aksa mosque. The EU demand to respect agreements was intended mainly against Israel which was requested to make "a significant and responsible withdrawal" but it "forgot" to tell this to Arafat.

The Luxembourg Declaration also said: "The EU will also continue to monitor closely developments on the ground through its own human rights, Jerusalem and settlements watch instruments." The EU does not disclose what instruments it employs for monitoring Israel's activities in Jerusalem, but this admission will require Israel to respond accordingly and to monitor closely actions of the Union which might harm the unity of Jerusalem.

The writer is a Jerusalem Post columnist.

Talk to the enemy

MARK HELLER

P rime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has met twice in the last two months with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and he is scheduled to meet next month with President Clinton. The subject of these meetings is something that is still called "Israeli-Palestinian negotiations," but that has, in fact, become "Israeli-American negotiations."

This change has profound implications for Israel's relations with both the Palestinians and the Americans. Although the conventional chronology of the peace process begins with the American-sponsored conference in Madrid in 1991, there was no real breakthrough until direct talks between Israel and the PLO produced an agreement on the Declaration of Principles in 1993, about which America and the rest of the world learned only retrospectively.

Direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations remained the engine of the process, with all its ups and downs, until the

Palestinian side. It is true that American negotiators will probably accept more "reasonable" terms than Palestinian negotiators would have demanded, but it is also true that Israel will have to be far more responsive to American terms, whatever those be. And to be fair to Netanyahu, the Israeli government would have had to take American preferences into account in any circumstances.

Thus, the substantive outcome of an Israeli-American negotiation will probably not differ all that much from what would have been the outcome of an Israeli-Palestinian negotiation.

But the difference with respect to the psychological context will be immense.

Given the power asymmetries, any agreement negotiated directly between Israel and the Palestinians would enhance the sense of mutual confidence in commitment to the larger ends of the peace process, with positive ramifications for Israel's relations with the rest of the

The psychological dynamics of American-Israeli negotiations about peace with the Palestinians will not build up new Israeli political capital across the Arab world

Israeli elections of 1996. But since then, the government's barely-disguised revulsion at dealing with the Palestinians in the framework of Oslo has taken the form of provocative rhetoric and actions and resulted in a series of delays that virtually froze the process.

The United States had no proprietary interest in the DOP or in Oslo II, but it judges the costs of the breakdown implicit in this freeze to be unacceptable, and it has therefore stepped into the breach, first by bringing Netanyahu and Arafat to Washington to diffuse the tensions associated with the rioting following the opening of the Hasmonaean Tunnel in September 1996, then to break the logjam over the implementation of the agreed redeployment in Hebron in January 1997. Indeed, nothing could better symbolize the transformation of the American role than the fact that the critical talks over Hebron were held in the residence of the American Ambassador in Israel.

For most of 1997, that role has grown increasingly critical in keeping the process alive. One manifestation of this is the evolution of security contacts from a bilateral affair into a three-way forum, with the CIA providing the link, as well as occasionally playing arbiter between Israel and the Palestinians.

Another is the current round of contacts with the US about the second redeployment, a direct consequence of the government's refusal to consult with the Palestinians about the first redeployment. For instead of being free to postpone the second redeployment indefinitely, or at least to decide its extent unilaterally, Israel must now negotiate it with the United States.

In these negotiations, the US, in effect, represents the

Arab world.

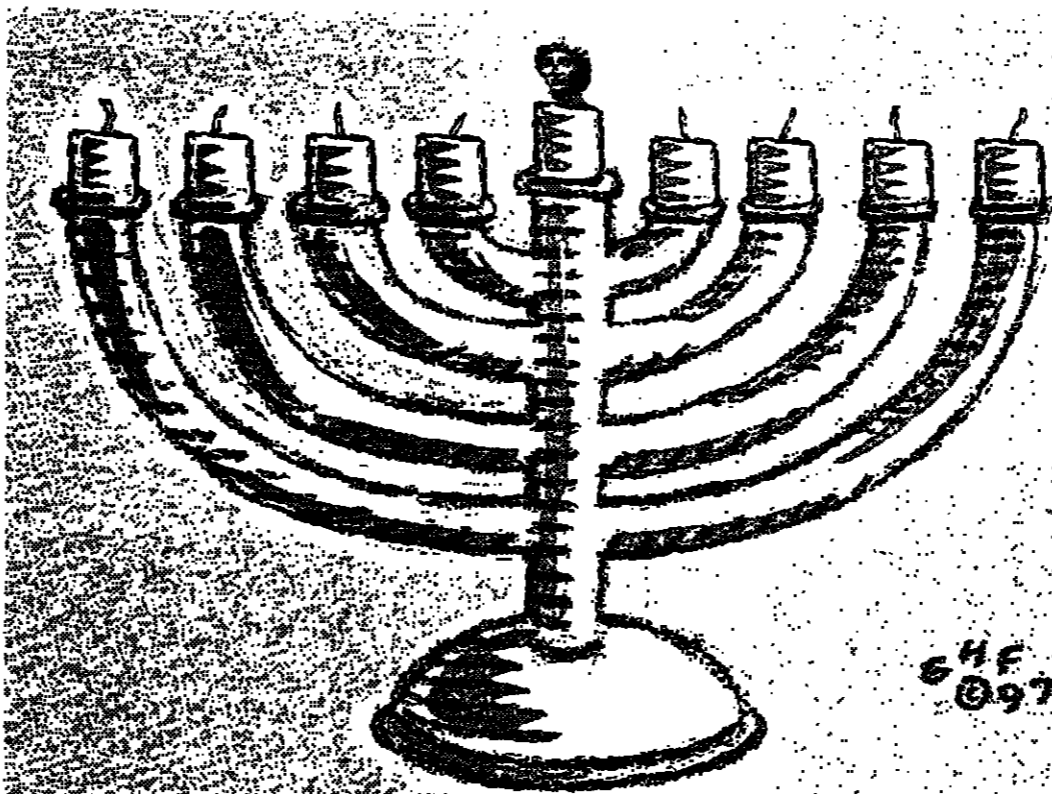
However, any agreement negotiated between Israel and the Americans will inevitably raise suspicions that it was shaped in response to American pressure, or at least by the need to preempt American displeasure. In either case, the dynamics of the decision will not reinforce the Palestinian commitment to relations of peace with Israel or build up new Israeli political capital in the Arab world. But it will entail the expenditure of Israeli political capital in the United States.

The implications of all this should be clear. First of all, if some Oslo-related concessions are unavoidable, Israel is better off discussing them directly with the Palestinians, even if that entails marginally worse terms on specific issues. For in the grand political scheme of things, any concession to the Palestinians is worth much more than a concession to the United States.

The second is that, if the government is still unwilling or unable to take the direct approach, it should at least make sure that doesn't weaken its ability to deal with the US Administration by further undermining its support in the US Congress and American public opinion, including American Jews.

Even if the government is prepared to accept that its policies on the peace process will alienate some of these constituencies, it makes no sense to pursue policies in other areas that simply further aggravate the problem. And the Conversion Law bear is still lurking out there in the woods.

The writer is a senior research associate at Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies.



What is Hanukka about?

Maimonides, in his great Code, describes the mitzva of lighting Hanukkah candles as "extremely beloved." At least in this instance, popular imagination and Halacha are congruent. No holiday so resonates with modern Jews as Hanukkah.

But if Hanukkah is much beloved by Jews even today, it is often for the wrong reasons. In America, the holiday has long been a poor man's Christmas. Jewish children boast to their classmates that their present giving extends over eight days.

In Israel, the story of the Maccabees' triumph over the mighty Seleucid Empire has been appropriated as part of the process of national myth-building. The victory of the "few over the many, of the weak over the mighty" is portrayed as foreshadowing the miraculous Jewish victory in 1948 over the vastly more numerous Arab armies. Our Sages emphasized the miracle of the oil; today we focus only on the miracle of the military victory.

Yet the portrayal of Hanukkah only as a revolt against a foreign oppressor — stout-hearted Jews against cruel Greeks — does considerable violence to history. The Maccabees launched a civil war, as well as a revolt against a foreign tyrant. The first person felled by Mattathias, the patriarch of the family, was not a Greek, but a Jew who offered a sacrifice on the pagan altar in Modi'in.

For every mother who defied Antiochus' ban on circumcision, was thrown from the walls of Jerusalem with her newborn babe for doing so, there were many more Jews who adorned their shops and courtyards with wreaths of roses symbolizing the superiority of the Greek gods. For all those burned alive in caves as they observed Shabbat in secret, there were many more who proclaimed that they had no more portion in the God of Israel on the forehead of their bulls and beasts of burden.

Long before Antiochus declared war on the practice of Judaism, a large portion of the priestly and upper classes had fully embraced Hellenism. In addition, those leaders provided enough sensual delights and entertainments to win over the weak-willed among the common people as well. But, for the contempt for the Law shown by Jews themselves, Antiochus would never have been emboldened to try to wipe out all Jewish practices.

Among those Greek practices that loomed largest as abominations in the eyes of Mattathias and his sons were the athletic contests in which upper-class Jewish youth eagerly participated. Those contests were an expression of the

JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

Greek obsession with proving oneself. Virtue for the Greeks had nothing to do with the moral content of one's actions but only with establishing one's superiority in some form of human endeavor. The agon, or contest, whether in art or sports, played a central role in Greek culture.

BY CONTRAST, the idea of heroic self-expression is totally foreign to Jewish thought. The rabbis were not concerned with proving themselves. They did not seek to establish their own greatness but to conform their deeds to the Divine will. They measured every action and thought by the calipers of morality, not by the abilities revealed.

To participate in the Greek games, Jewish youths had evidence of their circumsions surgically removed. For the Greeks, who identified the natural with the ideal, circumcision was nothing less than mutilation, a violation of the perfection of nature. For Jews, however, the body only becomes perfect as it relates to God through the performance of a mitzva. Only after his brit mila is Abraham described in the Torah as being complete or perfect.

Given how faithful Jews like Mattathias and his sons abhorred Greek athletic contests, the naming of the modern Jewish Olympiad after the Maccabees represents a breathtakingly audacious inversion of everything they stood for. But that is what happens when history is ransacked for useful symbols in the service of myth-making.

For the last 200 years or so, much of world Jewry has been torn apart by a struggle reminiscent of that between the Maccabees and their Jewish contemporaries. Those wishing to assimilate into the dominant national or world culture are pitted against those determined to preserve the uniqueness of Jewish life based on Torah.

Since the early 1800s, a new religion has even been created to facilitate Jewish assimilation. The first goal of German Reform was full citizenship for Jews. The purchase price was renunciation of all Jewish national goals and aspirations. All references to a return to Zion or a reconstituted national existence were purged from the Reform prayer book. "Jerusalem is to us an indifferent city," proclaimed Abraham Geiger, with the leader of German Reform. German Jews began to refer to themselves not as Jews, which term implied a national identity, but as Germans of the Mosaic faith.

SINCE JEWS had always perceived of themselves as one people

by virtue of their Law — a Law which preceded their entry into the Land and which they carried with them into exile — rejection of the Law went together with the renunciation of national identity. "The Talmud must go," said Geiger, "along with the Bible as a Divine work."

Fearful that those who stubbornly clung to the Law would reveal that Jews were not yet worthy of emancipation, Reformers used their power, in every city in which they gained control of the communal organization, to brutally oppress the traditionalists. Mikvaot were filled in, the production of kosher food halted, and yeshivot closed. The Frankfurt community board, like Antiochus, banned the study of Torah and employed the local police to enforce that ban. (The vaunted Reform tolerance did not extend to those wishing to practice their Judaism according to the tradition.)

Immanuel Kant, the greatest of German philosophers, announced that Jews would only be accepted if they purged their religion of its ancient identifying ritual, and many were only too eager to comply. Reformers introduced organs and choirs into the house of the worship, moved the bima to the front, and placed the rabbi facing the congregation dressed in elegant robes, all in slavish imitation of the nearby Lutheran service.

Kant, not Moses the Lawgiver, became the patron saint of German Reform.

According to Kant, only an autonomously chosen act has any moral value. His elevation of individual conscience to the role of ultimate arbiter of morality remains the watchword of Reform to this day.

For that reason, Reform is constitutionally hostile to the very idea of Halacha, or Divine command. It must reject any binding standards for individuals or congregations as a matter of principle. Some congregations prefer a little more ritual, some a little less. But either way, writes Jakob Peuchowski, a leading Reform theologian, that ritual represents "religious pagantry, not Halacha." W. Gunther Plaut, another leading Reform thinker, characterizes modern Reform as "Jewishly inspired Unitarianism."

As we light the Hanukkah candles this year, we might all ask ourselves: Would we have been with the Maccabees or with the Hellenists? Even more pertinently: Are we today part of the problem of assimilation or part of the solution?

The writer is a Jerusalem Post columnist.

Middle Israel
AMOTZ ASA-EL

Don't cry for Ofakim

Considering that work — as Voltaire said — keeps boredom, vice and need at bay, one is compelled to identify with those who lack it.

And yet there is a gap between this dicum's morality — which entails expressing compassion and extending assistance — and its economics, which should make us wonder why the jobs are such in the first place.

Judging by the hysteria with which recent factory closures were greeted here, one could assume that the economy is on the verge of a depression. The facts, fortunately, are different.

With inflation and joblessness at roughly 8 percent each and growth at 2-3 percent, Israel's economy is in better shape than many fully developed Western economies.

In fact, the term "recession" — which in the context of a few hick towns' labor plight has been uttered here as liberally as Shas and Gesher say "give me" — has yet to become applicable to the Israeli economy. Recessions are the periods in which economies shrink at least two con-

market forces which would have placed the frontier in the hands of the middle classes instead of the proletariat.

David Ben-Gurion's personal migration to the Negev was an admirable exercise in leadership by example, but also a colossal failure attempt to draw skilled people to the south. It would have been different if — beside the sermonizing, idealism and charisma which he offered in abundance — he would also have built a high-speed railway line between Eilat and Haifa. That's how the US breathed life into what lay between its Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Why can't we do the same thing between the Red and Mediterranean seas?

Today, the twin original sins of governmental dependency and poor transportation have yet to be uprooted. Yes, Binyamin Netanyahu understands and accepts the theory, but after 18 months in office it is clear that he didn't work on railway-development plans as opposition leader nor, after 18 months in office, has he gotten much on the drawing

The development towns' plight may be closer to us emotionally, but the Asian financial mayhem is closer economically, and it calls for budgetary discipline

secutive quarters: Israel has yet to experience the first such quarter this decade.

Surely, none of this would comfort Ofakim's, Or Akiva's or Shilomi's *les miserables*. Yet their predicament poses no major threat to the economy.

If anything, the alarming sign on the wall is the Asian financial crisis, which must entail the kind of budgetary discipline that has been abandoned in response to naked emotional blackmail by a well-lubricated social lobbying machine.

Diagnosing the state of our labor market through its performance in small and remote localities is absurd. This economy's furnace, like the rest of the industrialized world's, is in the big cities; and there joblessness is hovering at around 2 percent. It follows that those who cannot find work in the periphery should be mentally prepared and technically enabled to seek it where the market naturally offers it, rather than demand it where bureaucrats artificially locate it.

It was this kind of flexibility and mobility which allowed the US economy to emerge from a true recession during the Bush years into its current state of near-full employment.

In his monumental *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1835 that the US and Russia would "some day" each determine the fate of half the world. Both, he noted, were conquering vast territories, but the Americans were doing so by unleashing individual initiative while the Russians were resettling people by command.

ISRAEL, TOO, bused and dumped thousands of gullible immigrants throughout its desolate periphery; that's how most development towns came into being back in the 1950s.

For work, those forebears of today's unskilled development-town dwellers depended on then-finance minister Pinhas Sapir's infamous notebook, with which he made elaborate combinations between industrialists, cheap labor and state aid. That is how Ofakim's low self-esteem came into being, and how it was conditioned to expect its problems to be solved by others.

Not unlike Czarist Russia, Israel of the Fifties kept at bay the simple

board as prime minister.

Worse yet, while the government focuses on a provincial problem like Ofakim, and draws from it budgetary-expansive conclusions, it neglects pondering Asia's financial crisis, which calls for the very opposite kind of response.

TADIRAN'S ADMISSION this week that a sizable order from Korea Telecom had been canceled, and the plunging of leading Israeli share prices in Wall Street over the last few weeks, should serve as blunt reminders that, while Middle Israel is emotionally closer to Ofakim, economically it is closer to Seoul, Bangkok and Tokyo.

The main threat which Asia's ailing tigers now pose to the global economy is a severe contraction in world trade. For this modest economy to emerge fully unscathed from a global crisis, should there be one, is unthinkable. The question therefore, is how to minimize its damage. And the answer is, by sharply increasing the middle classes' economic freedom and scope of opportunities.

Specifically, this means launching an infrastructure revolution, breaking up utility monopolies, and cutting public spending, which currently gobbles half our gross domestic product, i.e. some 30 percent higher than the Western average.

Unfortunately, judging by the second Netanyahu budget, none of these is in the offing.

Ours remains a bloated and misguided budget, glaringly devoid of the Thatcherite vision to which Netanyahu is nominally committed, and laden with funding for assorted absurdities from non-Zionist yeshivot and fiscally derelict municipalities to anti-economic capital-investment aid and children's allowances for non-needy families. And so, we now are in for even higher taxes, while our familiar host of arm-twisters and emotional blackmailers continue to foam at the mouth.

Surely, it's time all this came to an end. And equally surely, no advance warning will make our fiscally shortsighted leaders change course. Apparently, they prefer to follow the lead of their derelict peers in Southeast Asia, who are now being whipped by the global village's impartially merciless financial markets.

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Hounding Hebrew in Montreal

L. Berson & Fils is one of those almost-vanished little Jewish businesses, "Est. 1921" in Montreal, incongruous but still thriving among the trendy bars and shops of St. Laurent Boulevard.

It could be the setting for a Bashevis Singer short story, especially now. For Mendy Berson is a criminal, and the 50-year-old sign his grandfather raised outside his gravestone engraving factory proclaims it.

It proclaims it in Hebrew. Last week, at last, someone called the language cops.

Well no, of course Mendy isn't a criminal, except in the squinty Orwellian eyes of Quebec's Francophone Sway Team, and even they have been forced to back off under a storm of outraged protests and a good old-fashioned media campaign in defense of the common man.

The sign put up by Mendy's grandfather says "monuments" in Hebrew. It has been hanging outside the family business for only 50 of its 76 years. Mendy has been chipping away at the marble and granite for the bereaved of Montreal's Jewish community, unaware that for the past 19 years the old sign has been screaming "language criminal."

In Quebec, the language cops are riding high. The land is awash with subversive small traders whose signs read "For Sale" instead of "A Vendre." Quebec's Commission for the Protection of the French Language (so, sue me for translating it) declared that Mendy Berson's sign was illegal because the Hebrew word "monuments" was too big compared to the French words.

Achtung dossier! Bilingual signs in Quebec are only legal as long as the French words are twice as big as the "other language." The five Hebrew letters on the sign are slightly larger than the French.

The language law was intended to target that definitely hated "other language" of the subversive Anglos, but what the heck if some respected Jewish businessman gets swept up in the purge? The *Montreal Gazette* quickly leaped to Berson's side and French Language Minister Louise Beaudoin and her loony inspectors found themselves the laughing stock of Canada and beyond, and censured in the National Assembly.

Last year Beaudoin came up with this creepy Tautoulic edit: "We must reverse the spirit of linguistic surrender and slip-sliding toward bilingualism." Last week it came back to haunt her from behind the gravestones of Berson's yard.

"It's not an abuse, it's just an error of judgment," said she, slipping into the spirit of linguistic surrender when forced to call off the Hebrew-sniffer squad. "The dossier has been closed."

Wow! Mendy had a "dossier," even? And "they" have egg on their faces, as Berson told the media when he thanked everyone for their support. He also had a shrewd idea on why they closed the "dossier" so fast and what was idiosyncratically illegal yesterday suddenly became sensibly legal today.

"The only thing that matters to them is their image in the United States," said Berson. "And they went after the wrong man."

Five-letter word B'nai Brith agreed. Quebec's regional director Robert Libman said "the lesson is, if you fight back, they back off. No one should roll over and play dead... Here's the government blowing tax dollars on useless bureaucrats

who have nothing to do but go after petty violations of unfair language legislation."

Nor is this the first time the useless ones have targeted the Jewish community. Last year, lacking more serious matters to occupy themselves, they launched a pre-Pessah crackdown on kosher foods which bore un-kosher English labels. Don't bank on "them" learning a lesson either. Going after Berson proves they learned nothing from the international contempt the kosher-label fiasco brought.

If the story was "an error of judgment," it was a malicious one. Even under the idiotic language law's own provisions, Berson should have been exempt, since he provides a specialized ethnic need. His is the only business that can engrave Hebrew-language gravestones, so 99 percent of his clients are Jewish. (The remainder are Greek, he says.) One newspaper reported a rumor it could not confirm that the language inspectors pounced on Berson because someone had anonymously complained the Hebrew on his sign said something rude about French Canadians.

Oh yes, that's a good one - in five Hebrew letters, too? (Mind you, in English, we could manage something appropriate in four letters...)

Berson's case is interesting for us here, and of course it was the suspect whiff of official anti-Semitism that perked up media ears and carried the story beyond Quebec. But to put it in wider perspective, this useless language commission with its inch-rulers and spy cameras also investigates thousands of complaints every year about pizza parlors serving Italian with their anchovies, or English bookstores with signs in Gaelic. Most of the complaints are phoned in by Quebec's lively network of anti-Hispano, anti-Semitic, anti-Anglic, anti-Celtic busybodies.

Small small, small Jennifer Robinson, one of the *Gazette*'s correspondents who fought the good fight for Mendy Berson, wrote: "Quebec's language inspectors specialize in going after petty infractions exactly like the one on Mr. Berson's sign."

Among those she listed was "a small cafe on Victoria Ave., targeted for its otherwise legal sign because the already-inconspicuous words 'Take Out' aren't small enough compared to the French equivalent." Boy, those inspectors really do think size is important.

Robinson concluded that there is no shortage of "errors of judgment" at the commission. "Just about everything these people do is petty... That's because there is no real problem with signs in Montreal. [The minister's] Office de la Langue Francaise reports that more than 99 per cent of the commercial signs in Montreal are primarily or only in French. And yet, the Quebec government behaves as if French were threatened and nothing had changed since Mr. Berson's grandfather hung up his sign."

Mendy said that had the bureaucrats pushed the point, he would have painted out both the French and Hebrew and left only his name on the sign, "even if I'm too old to climb ladders and paint in the cold."

That would have been a pity. One of the rare Hebrew signs in Montreal can now stand as a "monument" to one more little victory in every little man's unending war against "them" in the Ministry of Truth.

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer

Tokyo pressuring banks to help bail out South Korea

By KEIKO KAMBARA

TOKYO - Bank of Japan Governor Yasuo Matsuhashita suggested Japanese banks extend the length of their loans to South Korean banks in a meeting with South Korea's central bank governor.

Japanese banks hold the largest share of \$100 billion in short-term foreign debt Korean banks must repay over the next year. Rolling over Japanese bank loans is a key to the stability of Korea's financial system. Yet Japan's ailing banks are in the midst of a credit crunch and trying to cut back lending.

Matsuhashita voiced strong expectations Japanese banks will roll over their loans on a voluntary basis, said Takashi Anzai, executive director at the Bank of Japan, after Matsuhashita met with Bank of Korea Governor Lee Kyung Suk.

Lee has been making the rounds of Japan's biggest banks for two days after the Korean economy collapsed, requiring the biggest International Monetary Fund bailout in history.

While the phrasing was oblique, the message from Matsuhashita was unmistakable. The question is whether Japanese bureaucrats can still get a financial industry weakened by bad loans and scandal to do what they want.

The Bank of Korea governor also met with an important Ministry of Finance bureaucrat, Vice Minister for International Affairs Eisuke Sakakibara.

Sakakibara also put pressure on the banks by telling them today that private creditors should cooperate to help Korea, according to the ministry.

Yesterday's meeting of the two central bank governors followed an agreement yesterday among the International Monetary Fund, the US, Japan and 11 other nations to accelerate \$10 billion in loans to South Korea as part of a \$60 billion bailout package. The accelerated loans are aimed in part at encouraging foreign banks to roll over their loans to Korean borrowers.

Korea's financial institutions owe more than \$10 billion worth of debt that matures by December 31. In January and February, another \$18 billion comes due. At the end of 1996, Japanese banks had \$24.3 billion in outstanding loans to South Korea, according to the Bank for International Settlements.

Yesterday, after meeting with Lee, Norinchukin Bank - the central credit union for Japan's farm cooperatives - suggested it will roll over at least some short-term loans to Korean banks. It wouldn't say how much it had lent.

Lee also met with Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi Ltd., Japan's largest bank, but the bank was noncommittal. Lee met with four other banks today. None of the banks contacted would speak on the record. The IMF said it plans to provide South Korea with \$2 billion on December 30, moving up the initial schedule from January 8.

The Group of Seven industrialized countries along with Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland said they will also deliver \$8 billion to South Korea next month.

The G-7 members are the US, Japan, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Canada. The group's latest pledge illustrates how dire South Korea's debt crisis became.

The Korean won Tuesday topped 2,000 to the US dollar to reach a record low, halving its value in just one month. That makes it harder for Korean companies to repay their loans from foreign banks. (Bloomberg)

Mexican president challenged by massacre

By JOHN RICE

MEXICO CITY (AP) - A sputtering Indian rebellion, a village power struggle and perhaps even a squabble over a gravel pit exploded into a massacre of 45 people, creating a serious challenge for President Ernesto Zedillo.

In southern Mexico's Chiapas state even the most local of conflicts can erupt with national complications.

A day after gunmen descended Monday on the Indian village of Acteal, chasing down residents with AK-47s, survivors blamed supporters of the president's Institutional Revolutionary Party.

They have been struggling for local dominance with sympathizers of the Zapatista National Liberation Front and other independent groups.

Zedillo called it "a cruel, absurd, unacceptable criminal act whose only response can be the most firm and severe application of justice."

He ordered his attorney general to take over the case to punish the killers "regardless of their social, political or religious condition."

Many Mexicans believe that state, or even federal, officials, have encouraged paramilitary groups of the sort accused of the attack. Police in Mexico have been killed in clashes in the Chenalhó area, where Monday's massacre occurred.

If PRI loyalists feel the federal government is abandoning its traditional support, local leaders could



Women from Acteal weep during a wake for fellow dead villagers in the southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas. Survivors say gunmen from the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, spent hours shooting and hacking to death 45 people. (AP)

Zapatista rebels and their supporters remain strong. In recent months, some 20 PRI members have been killed in clashes in the Chenalhó area, where Monday's massacre occurred.

If PRI loyalists feel the federal government is abandoning its traditional support, local leaders could

look elsewhere for support, and the party's base in Chiapas could be weakened. The party, which lost control of Congress this year, needs all the votes it can muster for upcoming elections.

A crackdown on armed pro-government groups also could embolden anti-government factions, some

allied with the Zapatistas, though the dispute in Acteal is one of many that have erupted in Chiapas since a mid-January 1994 cease-fire in the Zapatista revolt. Its scale, however, seems to raise the stakes in the violent clashes as well as

the threat of bloody retaliation.

more than 300 people have died in clashes over land and village power throughout the state. In Acteal, according to survivors, the dispute included control of a gravel pit and a conflict between rival Chenalhó governments: one pro-PRI, the other pro-Zapatista.

Mexico volcano erupts

MEXICO CITY (AP) - The majestic, menacing Popocatepetl volcano southeast of Mexico City sent an explosive blast of glowing rock and ash into the air, alarming thousands of nearby residents.

There were no reports of injury. The eruption yesterday subsided after about 20 minutes, Roberto Melli, director of the National Center for the Prevention of Disasters, told Radio Red.

Glowing red rocks spat from the volcano were visible from small villages on the slopes of the 5,500-meter mountain as residents celebrated Christmas Eve - a holiday during which Mexicans traditionally set off fireworks.

Melli said the blast was "much smaller" than the June 30 eruption that sent ash raining down on Mexico City, 70 kilometers northwest of the crater.

Red Cross officials said they were on alert, while scientists said they were closely monitoring the volcano, which has periodically spat ash, rocks and steam since emerging from a 70-year slumber in 1954.

Melli told Radio Red that an earthquake of magnitude 3.5 apparently shook clear the volcano's ducts, causing it to spit incandescent rocks and ash into the air.

"The activity has returned to normal," he said. "There is no evidence that it will continue."

The last notable eruption was on December 6, when the volcano also spat rocks and ash, along with a 3,000-meter plume of smoke.

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Court rules in favor of Gibor bail-out plan

By DAVID HARRIS and GALIT LIPKIS BECK

Gibor Sabrina won another chance for survival yesterday when a Tel Aviv District Court judge ruled it could continue running for at least another three months.

The Knesset Finance Committee approved an NIS 9 million Treasury loan to cover employees wages, the Histadrut's Leverage Growth fund approved an NIS 2 million guarantee to the creditor banks and the banks agreed to absorb an operating loss of NIS 2 million for a three-month period.

Treasury's initial refusal to guarantee the company's continued operations. Gibor has accumulated debts of NIS 111m.

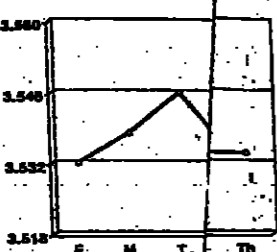
receiver, forecasts the company will earn NIS 4.5m. over the three months. He intends to operate the company in stages, starting with domestic market operations.

Despite requests from workers, initially the Treasury said it was not prepared to offer any precedent-setting guarantees to the ailing factory, according to coalition leader in the committee Michael Kleiner (Gesher).

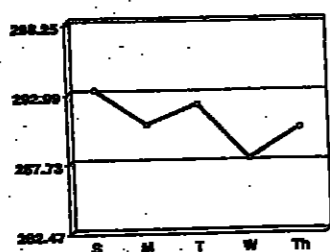
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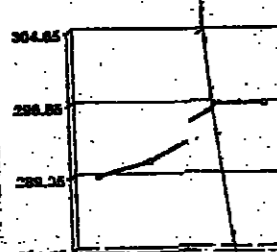


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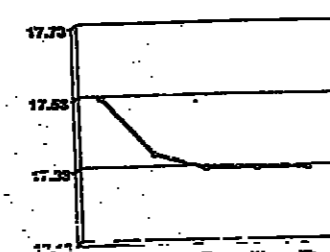
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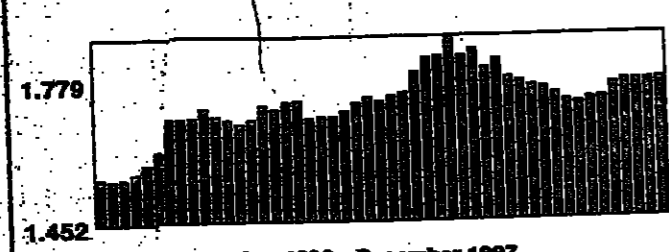


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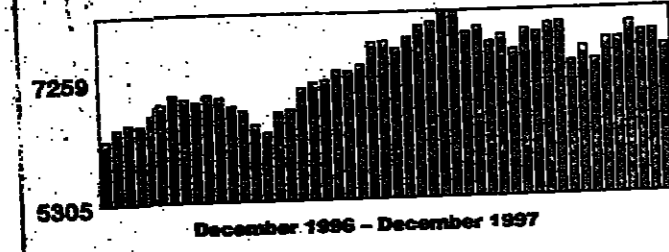
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Koor se Shemen for \$24.7m.

Koor Inc., the nation's largest holding company, yesterday announced an agreement to sell its 72% stake in edible-oil mShemen to Coralon, an Israel-based company held by overseas investors, for \$24.7 million.

October industrial growth at 3%

Industrial growth reached an annualized three percent in October, the Central Bureau of Statistics said yesterday, a similar seasonally adjusted rate to that recorded in the third quarter.

Russia passes 1998 budget

Communist party No. 2 Valentin Kuptsov (center) gestures as he speaks to his faction members in the State Duma in Moscow yesterday. The Duma passed Russia's 1998 draft budget at its second reading yesterday.



Easing of Arab boycott shaved \$2,343 off average Israeli-sold car

By FELICE MARANZ

Israeli car buyers gained roughly \$2,343 apiece in 1995 after the Arab boycott eased, according to a study by two Tel Aviv University professors.

Ferishman and Garofal measured how the boycott influenced car sales in Israel. In a paper to be published this spring, they evaluate the impact the trading ban would have had on Israeli car purchasers if it had been in place in 1995.

that were purchased, as well as the total number of cars purchased. The five biggest Japanese car makers - Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co., Nissan Motor Co., Mazda Motor Corp. and Mitsubishi Motors Corp. - all refused to sell cars in Israel, as did all Korean car makers, they said.

"Given that 113,030 private automobiles were sold in the Israeli market in 1995, had the boycott continued, the cost to consumers would have been more than \$264 million in that year," they wrote.

Pizza Hut, KFC take the Pepsi challenge - and choose Coke

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken may be owned by PepsiCo, but as of January 1,

local outlets will serve Coca Cola, the Globes financial daily reported yesterday.

A loophole in Pizza Hut's agreement with the local franchiser

Shlomo Dahucky means that the company, which only sells Pepsi's soft drinks in its global network of restaurants, is not mandated to sell any particular soft drink brand.

offered the franchisee a better deal. Tempo, Pepsi's local distributor would not comment on pricing arrangements and negotiations with Pizza Hut.

Dahucky bought the license from the Dai Group in 1996. There are currently 14 Pizza Hut outlets in Israel and six Kentucky Fried Chicken branches.

Pizza Hut sales are expected to generate NIS 90 million this year. In 1996, the restaurants lost about NIS 30m.

After Dahucky bought the rights to operate Pizza Hut in Israel, he implemented a recovery program, which involved firing 30% of the staff and decreasing food orders.

The company did not say whether it would continue selling Pepsi soft drinks.



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Unsettled five minutes from Kfar Sava



'Netanyahu denies everything. It is all a bluff to keep us off guard. We don't accept that he went to talk to Albright without a map' - Haim Shavit of Alei Zahav.

From Peduel (below), you can see Alei Zahav. You can also see the minarets in the Palestinian village of Rafat, home of the infamous terrorist, Yihye ('the Engineer') Ayash.

(Photos: Karen Ben-zion)



They live just outside the Green Line. And they believed their presence was vital for security. That's why being left off a Defense Ministry security map came as such a blow to residents of three settlements in Samaria, Herb Keinon reports

It was Hanukka 1993, the eve of the implementation of the Gaza/Jericho First agreement, and high on the public agenda were two gnawing questions: Which settlements will eventually be removed or surrounded by a Palestinian entity? And how will the settlers respond?

In Gush Katif, where Netzarim and Kfar Darom were the two settlements most often mentioned as candidates for oblivion, a central Hanukka party was held at Netzarim. "With this party, we are showing that, even with the agreement, we are not folding up, going into bomb shelters, biting our fingernails," Netzarim secretary Shlomo Kostiner said at the time. "We are not withdrawing."

Four years later, the same two gnawing questions remain high on the public agenda. The issues remain the same; only the names of the settlements and the people pledging to stay in them forever have changed. In 1994, the settlements under discussion were Na'ama and Beit Ha'arava in the Jordan Valley; in 1995, it was the turn of Kadim and Ganim near Jenin. Today, surprisingly, it is a cluster of settlements in western Samaria, the settlements "five minutes from Kfar Sava" that have suddenly seen a question mark placed near their names. Two weeks ago, during the cabinet debate over which final status map to present US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, residents of Beit Aryeh, Peduel, Alei Zahav and a few other settlements found themselves drawn outside Israel's borders on Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai's security map. This came as a total surprise for many in these communities, people who believed their eventual annexation by Israel was a foregone conclusion.

"I was shocked," said Haim Shavit, secretary of Alei Zahav. "It was like being kicked in the pants. It was an earthquake." Alei Zahav is a settlement of some 90 families located about eight kilometers east of Petah Tikva, or about a 20-minute car ride from Modi'in. The drive to the settlement goes through no Palestinian villages, only past olive orchards and breathtaking scenery. A tall water tower with a red-and-white checkerboard design at the top,

now as much a distinguishing feature in Samaritan settlements as the red roofing on homes, is visible for kilometers around. These water towers were built in the settlements over the last year, as emergency reservoirs in case the water supplies to the settlements is cut off.

About two minutes down the road from Alei Zahav is Peduel, a religious settlement of some 100 families. Both are classic dormitory communities just outside the Green Line, not stereotypically ideological communities near densely populated Palestinian areas. They have appeared on "Israel's side" of a fence border on a variety of maps drawn up over the years. These are communities that, using Yitzhak Rabin's lexicon, are "security" settlements, not "political" ones. They are among those planned by the Labor government in the 1970s - though they were actually set up during the Likud-led government of the early 1980s - to widen Israel's waist at its narrowest point, secure the country's water resources and gain control over the approaches to Ben-Gurion Airport.

NECHAMA FELDMAN, 34, lives in Peduel. For Rosh Hashana's Tashlich ceremony - the symbolic casting of sins into a body of water - Feldman and her family walk a few meters within the settlement to a ridge, and say the prayers while looking out onto the Mediterranean.

That Feldman can see the sea from Peduel is significant for far more than religious reasons; it illustrates that whoever sits on the hill can see not only the Mediterranean, but everything east of it, including the airport, Tel Aviv, Rosh Ha'ayin, Hadera and - on an especially clear day - the tower of Haifa University. From the ridge, it is also possible to see minarets in the Palestinian villages of Deir Ballut, Kafar Dikh, and Rafat, home of the infamous terrorist, Yihye ('the Engineer') Ayash.

National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon is a frequent visitor to the ridge. About once a week, he brings different delegations there, said settlement residents. And, they said, Sharon has dubbed Peduel, "the country's balcony," because of its commanding view.



'We would stay in a Palestinian sea. The main concern is about whether new families will move in. We will stay' - Nehama Feldman of Peduel.

He brings visitors to Peduel to demonstrate the strategic necessity of holding these hills. Needless to say, the settlement was well within his "national interest" map.

The residents have long believed that their presence is vital for security, which is why being left off the first draft of a Defense Ministry security map has come as such a blow. It's the same feeling that Golan residents experienced when they found out, after years of being told their communities were vital for security, that they were expendable. And it's similar to the fear that swept over Jordan Valley settlers - led to believe since 1967 that they are essential to secure approaches from the east - when they learned that security concepts had changed and they were no longer indispensable.

"Everyone here was surprised," said Shavit, whose gold earring and rugged, mountain-mar appearance belie the typical settler stereotype. "From a strategic standpoint, every child knows that you can hit an El Al plane from here with a slingshot."

If that's the case, then surely the defense minister must know that. "Nobody is saying that Mordechai is an idiot," Shavit said. "The question is what price you are willing to pay to get a good rating. This type of map gets him a good media rating."

SHAVIT SAYS "agitation" in the settlement was stirred immediately after press reports that Alei Zahav was not included on Mordechai's map. Reports that it was added to the map later did not assuage the fears. Indeed, Shimon Cohen, an activist from Beit Aryeh, was meeting with Shavit the day of this interview to chart ways of fighting any attempt to isolate this cluster of settlements.

"This type of thing plants seeds of uncertainty," Shavit said. "Netanyahu denies everything, but we don't buy it. It is a bluff to

keep us off guard and to keep us groping in the dark. We don't accept that he went to talk to Albright without a map."

Shavit referred to the "bitterness of uncertainty," of not knowing what to tell his two sons when they ask whether the family will have to move, of anger at the government for not communicating with the settlement. He's echoing the sentiments of residents at Na'ama and Netzarim, Mitzpe Yericho and Neveh Dekalim since the beginning of the Oslo process.

Shavit, 40, who grew up in Arad and has lived in Alei Zahav for seven years, said that, theoretically, he could live surrounded by a Palestinian entity, as long as he had bypass roads. But those roads have not been built. His frustration, he said, is compounded by the mixed signals the settlement is receiving. On one hand, 15 new homes were just put up, with 40 more on the way. On the other, the settlement and Peduel was part of this week. But the settlement doesn't appear on Mordechai's map.

"The uncertainty is dreadful," he said. "I don't have answers for the families here or for my own family." While Shavit said he could live in an Israeli enclave in a Palestinian territory as long as he has roads to the settlement, Beit Aryeh's Cohen is adamantly opposed even to that notion. "It is forbidden to give up on this line of settlements," Ofarim, Beit Aryeh Peduel, Alei Zahav - because it is the final line of defense before the Jordan River," he said, sounding very much like the Likud Central Committee member that he is. "Thanks to us, Tel Aviv sleeps quietly. People forget that, now, we will have to defend them."

WALTER DANZIGER, 40, is a settler and describes his mood as one of "deep sadness." The head of Peduel, David Danziger, 40, is

concerned about their future. Danziger said he has not had to field any such questions. He attributed this in part to the religious faith of Peduel's settlers who, although many moved there to improve their standard of living, still believe that they are doing something looked favorably upon by God.

In the meantime, the settlement grows. Danziger, who lives in nearby Karnei Shomron, said Peduel will soon begin constructing 32 new single-family homes, with another 80 in the pipeline. These homes, all being built privately, cost between \$130,000 and \$150,000 for some 150 square meters.

Feldman, like Shavit, uses the word "illogical" to explain why she doesn't think her settlement is in danger. But then she corrected herself and said many things have happened over the last few years that don't seem logical to her. "People didn't wake up here in the morning and say, what are we going to do," she says. "They went to work, sent their kids to school, got ready for Hanukka parties. It was not even a topic of conversation on Shabbat. My parents mentioned it only in passing, saying they heard us on the news the other night."

Yet some 18 families living in mobile homes on the settlement while waiting for their homes to be built had some questions after

Mordechai's map was released, she says. "People are calling them and asking whether it is smart for them to put down money. But we [people who have already built homes] are not overly concerned." Feldman, a mother of six, says no one talks seriously anymore of uprooting settlements, because so many people are involved, and that she would stay in Peduel if her settlement were surrounded by a Palestinian entity.

"We would stay in a Palestinian sea," she said. "It is like when the intifada started, and people asked how we were going to make it, yet we made it. School buses were stoned, so the process was started to open a school here. The main concern is about whether new families will move in. We will stay."

But why? Why stay in an enclave surrounded by Palestinians when a move a few kilometers westward would put them squarely back inside the State of Israel?

"It is Eretz Yisrael, and you don't give up on Eretz Yisrael," she said. "And if you give up on this hill, then the people who will come after you will be looking right down into Tel Aviv. I know that they can move to the hill next door, but at least this hill will still be in our hands."

Then, sounding genuinely convinced, she adds: "I don't think it will ever get to that."

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KEY MARKS

Hollow promises for a troubled town?

The country's leaders swept into Ofakim this past week, and the prime minister pledged 300 new jobs. But residents tell Dan Izenberg that all the attention is too little, too late, and holds nothing for the long term



'Ofakim residents are not second-class.' (Israel Sun)



The city has become a symbol of the unemployment crisis in the South where 10 of the country's 12 hardest hit towns are located. (Rafi Weizman/Israel Sun)

A day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's highly-publicized visit to Ofakim on Monday, 130 of the town's 2,000 unemployed residents gathered at the local community center to seek the first fruits of his promise of better times - 50 new jobs at Israeli Aircraft Industries.

Several hours later, a local official read out the names of the 46 lucky people who were to begin working the next day. They had been chosen by company representatives who interviewed the applicants for less than a minute each. The rest shuffled home to resume their lives of indolence and financial dependency on their families, unemployment insurance or welfare. Many of them have not worked for several years. Some of the younger ones have never held a steady job.

During the past 10 days, since the city's 500 municipal workers imposed sanctions and the town was shut down for a day, Ofakim has become a symbol of the unemployment crisis in the South, where 10 of the country's 12 hardest hit communities are located. This city of 24,000 also has the dubious distinction of having the country's highest unemployment rate for the past few years. Not long ago, a staggering 17 percent

of the work force were out of jobs. Today, the unemployment rate is still more than 14%.

For five days, the usually neglected town was the center of national attention. Between last Thursday and Monday, President Ezer Weizman, Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak, Agriculture Minister Raphael Eitan, Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy, Labor and Social Affairs Minister Eli Yishai and Netanyahu dropped in to express solidarity and make pledges. Netanyahu promised to make 300 new jobs available immediately, send 440 unemployed people to job-training courses and another 198 to complete their schooling. He indicated that a railroad line would soon bring people between Beersheba and Tel Aviv in 50 minutes.

But Tuesday was the day after the night before and there was little joy in Ofakim, even among the 46 applicants who had been chosen by IAI. Perhaps those who were chosen restrained themselves out of deference to their neighbors who were not so lucky. Or perhaps the prospect of traveling some 200 kilometers and three hours each day to an unknown assignment in Lod dampened their enthusiasm.

IGOR KLEINER, 30, was one of the lucky ones. He came here from Moldova, in the former Soviet Union, six and-a-half years ago and has lived in Ofakim most of that time.

Married and the father of two, Kleiner hasn't had a steady job in four years.

"In my situation, I'm ready to work at anything, even for a salary of NIS 2,800," said Kleiner, as he waited quietly for the IAI decision. "All I want is for my kids to have something to eat."

Kleiner trained as a carpenter and a barber in Moldova and worked in a plastics factory for a year-and-a-half. In 1993, the factory moved to Beersheba and dismissed most of the local workers. Unlike IAI, the factory was not willing to provide transportation for workers in Ofakim. Since then, he has been stumbling from one unsatisfactory position to another.

"I worked in security, in electricity but everywhere I went it was a mess," he said. "They kept hiring and firing people, paid them whatever they felt like. One employer promised to pay me above the minimum wage after two months of work. I waited for about eight months and then he gave me an extra NIS 100."

News of the IAI interviews spread by word of mouth among the immigrants, who constitute 30 percent of the town's population.

"The guys told me there were interviews today and there might be work," said Kleiner. But the interview shed little light on what was expected of him.

"They just asked a few questions. What training do I have? How long have I been in Israel? What kind of work I've done. They told me I'd get more information if I'm accepted."

Forty-one-year-old Meir Ohana was not among the chosen. Ohana has been out of work for the last six months. Two years ago, he moved to Ofakim from Tel Aviv to join his wife and four children. Before that, he had commuted between the two cities after his wife moved back to her hometown to be with her family.

Ohana worked for the Ofakim Municipality for several months but was laid off in June. In Tel Aviv, his last job was in the catering and tourism industry. For many years before that, he had made shoes. He wasn't daunted by the fact that the IAI was looking for upholsterers and locksmiths.

"I think I can do what they want," he said. "It's no big deal."

All I need is a week or two of experience on the job. What choice do I have? I have to feed my children."

After two years in Ofakim, Ohana would like to move elsewhere but says he's trapped.

"I put up my home for rent but no one came to see it," he said. "People are afraid to move here because the most important thing is to earn a living."

He had mixed feelings about Netanyahu's promises.

"It's good that they came, even if they find solutions for just two families," he said. "But it's all cosmetic. The prime minister came and made promises. So far, it's all on paper and no one knows how it will turn out in practice. It was very hurtful and humiliating."

THE TOWN'S leaders agree with Ohana, though this may not be surprising since the mayor, Micha Herman, belongs to the Labor Party and the head of the local labor council, Yossi Marciano, belongs to Meretz.

"Now there are only 1,950 people left," said Herman ironically, after the names of the successful IAI applicants were read out in front of the town's shabby and graffiti-marred unemployment office. "The only way we can really solve the problem of the unemployed in Ofakim is by setting up new industries."

Marciano said he had not expected Netanyahu to come up with an industrial program to solve the unemployment problem.

"But a day after he came to speak at the top of his head and I'm sorry he didn't take the residents more seriously," he said.

"For example, he spoke about the train from Tel Aviv to Beersheba. I checked. Not a penny has been allocated to the project. And when it comes to unemployment, the solutions must be based on a defined social policy. For example, if they intend to bring a factory to manufacture locomotive parts next year, they should use the time until then to train the local residents to work in it."

But one thing that local Histadrut leaders and the government seem to agree on is that Ofakim cannot go back to the past to solve its problem.

"Ofakim must adjust to the 21st century," said trade union head Jimi Abecassis. "We must build hi-tech factories here because they are profitable. Textiles and food-based industries are not profitable today."

But while the government talks about hi-tech, it doesn't do anything to bring it to Ofakim, Abecassis continued. (Netanyahu, he said, promised the residents that the government would make every effort to encourage factories in the center of the country which want

to expand, but cannot afford the high cost of land to set up their new plants in the Negev.)

Yet the future - or a taste of it - has already arrived in Ofakim. Two years ago, following the closure of Ouman and another large local textile factory, ECI Telecom, the international hi-tech communications concern, set up shop in the town's industrial center. Today the Ofakim plant exports telephone cables, wires, motherboards and other sophisticated electronic equipment to 140 countries.

The factory currently employs 250 workers and plans to hire another 150 over the next few months. In fact, half of the 300 jobs Netanyahu promised on Monday are coming from ECI. According to the ECI general manager in Ofakim, Shlomo Halevy, the factory will employ 550 people by the end of the century, and most of them will come from Ofakim. Today, 170 of the plant's 250 workers are local residents.

The factory concentrated on hiring young people fresh out of the army to halt the drain of youth from the town, he said.

According to Halevy, employing local residents poses no problem.

"The entire operation is very hi-tech, but we don't do the research and development here, just the production. For that you don't need specialized education. We took people from the textile industry and retrained them. We gave them one month of classroom lessons and three months of on-the-job training." Some of the local workers are already moving up the ranks.

"We are hiring a new generation of managers from Ofakim," he said. "The senior management comes from Ashdod and Beersheba; but we are developing department and team managers from the ranks of these special people."

The decision to open the factory was made in January 1996. Four months later, the site was chosen. In June, ECI began production with 96 workers. Six months later it expanded to 130. Over the past year another 100 have been hired.

"It sounds simple, but the fact is that if ECI is at the vanguard of the future, no one is bringing up the rear. No high-tech factories are queuing up for Ofakim and no solutions are in sight for the 1,700 people who will not benefit from the government's emergency largesse.

"There's no more work," said 29-year-old Kolyev Tokif, who emigrated from the Ukraine two years ago and has been jobless for

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Yavne: a recipe for success

Ofakim, with the highest unemployment rate in the country, is not the only failed development town. But there are also many successes. Larry Derfner explores why some development towns have flourished, while others have floundered

There are two kinds of development towns in Israel — those that developed and those that didn't. Today when people think of a development town they think of Ofakim — an outpost of unemployment and despair, where minimum-wage textile factories and canneries are closing one after another as their employers relocate to Jordan, Egypt and the Far East where labor costs are about one-tenth of Israel's.

Ofakim has many sister cities in failure; mainly in the Negev, but some in Galilee: Netivot, Sderot, Mitzpe Ramon, Hatzor Haglilit and others. On the opposite side of the ledger are Arad, Karmiel, Migdal Ha'emek, Yavne, Yokne'am and other development towns which have attracted thriving businesses, where unemployment stays around the national rate, where young people plan their futures instead of their departures. So why do some development towns succeed while others fail? Gabi Azoulay, who came to Yavne as a child from Morocco in 1959 and now runs a successful restaurant in the center of town, notes, "Twenty years ago if you parked your car out here for 15 seconds, somebody would steal it. There were three street corners where drugs were sold. Now crime has basically vanished."

This city of 32,000 people, located midway between Rehovot and Ashdod, began in 1948 like many, if not most, other development towns — as a *ma'abara*, or transit camp, for immigrants, mainly from North Africa.

Today the town is crowded with late-model cars. There are large neighborhoods of villas with gardens and new apartment buildings are going up. The industrial zone, with high-tech factories like Orbotech, Biodan, Organics (and even a Ben and Jerry's), not only employs many locals, it's also a magnet for employees living outside the city.

When he was growing up, Azoulay, 41, went to high school out of town because at the time there was no high school in Yavne. Today Yavne's schools are considered among the best in Israel, and Azoulay says he wouldn't think of sending his four children anywhere else.

"When did Yavne turn around? When Meir took over," he replies.

Meir is Likud MK and coalition whip Meir Sheerit, who was mayor of Yavne from 1974 to 1987. Along with other former mayors MK Avraham Shohai (Arad), MK Shaul Amor (Migdal Ha'emek), the late Baruch Wenger (Karmiel) and a few others, Sheerit is considered one of the best of the development-town leaders. What did he do?

"Two things. First I made education the highest priority, almost the only priority," he says. "I realized that unless we improved the schools in Yavne, we would be turning out new generations of people who could not compete in the job market. We spent 70% of the local budget on education and culture. I also raised money from abroad for the schools, and pressured the national government to give us more education funds."



Yavne: From transit camp to middle-class merca. "Twenty years ago if you parked your car out here for 15 seconds, somebody would steal it." (Jonathan Bloom)

"The second stage was to build villas," he continues. "In 1979 we were the first city to institute the Build Your Own Home program (in which land was sold at extremely low prices) to people buying new houses. With a good school system and the possibility of building villas with gardens at relatively low prices, we were able to attract a stronger population to Yavne, which raised the overall level of the city."

Why didn't the leaders of Ofakim and other still-depressed towns do the same?

"They concentrated first on providing jobs, which was a big mistake," Sheerit replies. "Without good education, people aren't prepared for anything better than low-skilled labor, and even this is drying up now. Education is a long-term investment; you don't see the results for 10 years. But in a lot of other towns, the leaders always wanted

something to show right away. They spent their money on planting trees and putting up park benches."

Yavne however, has one distinct advantage over Ofakim and other failed development towns in the Negev and Galilee — it's in the center of the country, with easy access to jobs, services, entertainment and other amenities for a good life. People who live in Yavne can work in the Tel Aviv area, and people who work in the Tel Aviv area can move to Yavne.

In development towns, location may not count for everything, but it definitely counts for a lot. Migdal Ha'emek, for instance, is close to Haifa. And a number of Israel's coastal cities began as development towns for immigrants in the early years of statehood: Eilat, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Nahariya. Along with another former development town, Tiberias, their proximity to water made

them natural candidates for the tourism industry, and, in the case of Ashdod, for a major port, notes Arye "Lova" Eliav, who's probably had a longer, deeper involvement with development towns — all over the country, but mainly in the Negev — than any other Israeli.

"Despite what people say these days, when you look at the development towns, you see that the glass is not half-full, but two-thirds full or even more," Eliav says.

Originally there were 30 development towns — 15 in the Negev and 15 in Galilee — where the government built cheap housing for immigrants and offered large financial incentives for businesses to locate there. Today a total of some 1.5 million people live in them. All but nine or 10 of the original development towns, Eliav says, are now middle-class towns and cities.

Nine or 10 like Ofakim have remained "problematic," Eliav says, because (1) they are so distant from urban centers; (2) the government never channeled nearly enough money or attention to improve their education, industry and transportation accessibility; and (3) these towns never developed a strong local leadership. "They still need injections of government aid all the time," Eliav explains.

The two best-known development-town successes — the Negev's Arad, which Eliav conceived, and northern Galilee's Karmiel — thrived despite their distance from Israel's center. Eliav believes this was chiefly because Arad and Karmiel, along among the country's development towns, had inaster plans for civic and industrial growth even before the first residents moved in, so the towns were not left to the mercy of trial and all-too-frequent error.

In addition, he says, the original core of residents in Arad and Karmiel, as well as in Kiryat Gat, were veteran Israelis, many from nearby kibbutzim and moshavim, who were able to give these towns a stronger push than immigrants in other development towns could manage.

However, Dr. Shlomo Swirski, a sociologist who has written extensively about development towns, takes a much more critical view of their history. Arad and Karmiel cannot be compared to "classic" development towns like Ofakim and others, he says, because Arad and Karmiel began about a decade later, and "were initially planned for middle-class Israelis. At the beginning they even had selection committees which sifted out people of lower status."

Yavne and Migdal Ha'emek began thriving in the 1980s because they focused their efforts and resources, mainly land, on attracting middle-class homebuyers from outside. "Most of the veteran residents in these cities there have not benefited from the economic growth, except for the people who caught some of the fall-off, or trickle-down, as it's called, from the influx of new, wealthier residents," says Swirski, a leading figure at the

Adva Center, a social and economic policy think tank. He agrees that location has much to do with the success or failure of development towns, but disagrees that the quality of local leadership is important.

Ofakim, Yeroham, Netivot are in a permanent state of decline, he maintains, because governments over the decades pointed them in that direction, especially in education policy.

"If the government in the 1950s had built good high schools in these towns, the closure of a local textile plant would be a cause for celebration, because it would show that the current generation was going on to better occupations," says Swirski. Instead, early governments concentrated on building vocational schools — run by ORT, WIZO and Amal — to train local youth to work in the textile factories which, with their hugely generous government benefits and need for cheap, unskilled labor, were setting up shop in town.

Now the factories are closing and the development town residents aren't trained for anything better, Swirski says. He maintains that if Israel had built good academic high schools to prepare students for a higher level of employment, more sophisticated, better-paying industries might have been attracted to places like Ofakim.

Why didn't the country do this? Swirski says economic policy-makers of the time, such as Pinchas Sapir, subscribed to a then-popular European belief that all economies have to start from a primitive level and work their way up.

British industrialization began in the late 18th century with textiles. The theory was that you start with textiles, then you go to cars, then to electronic products," Swirski explains. He adds, sarcastically: "So the people who directed the Israeli economy figured Ofakim had to start in the late 18th century."

Ofakim has developed somewhat since then, but certainly not to the dawn of the 21st century. The development town of Yavne is there. Israel has many Yavnes. But it still has too many Ofakims.

Invest in people

'We cannot afford a policy of survival of the fittest,' says the president of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. In an interview with Abraham Rabinovich, economist Avishai Braverman outlines his ideas for tackling unemployment

providing role models." A small-scale tutoring program involving Ben-Gurion University students already exists in the "Daled" neighborhood across the road from the campus, Braverman notes. "What the students have been able to accomplish there is unbelievable."

He is particularly troubled by the growing disparity in Israel between rich and poor. The fabric of society, he fears, will not be able to take the strain if the imbalance is not somehow made less extreme. At the moment, the problem is growing steadily worse as

those with special training rake in, Bill Gates-like, an increasingly disproportionate share of wealth. "Israeli society in particular cannot accept high inequality. It will be broken by it. Even George Soros, the prophet of capitalism, realizes today the dangers of market forces running wild. His experience in eastern Europe and Russia showed him that if a market runs wild, without ethics, it can lead to gangster states. That's what he called it."

It is not the prospect of a gangster state that concerns Braverman here, but the possibility that national cohesion will be undermined making Israel prey for its enemies. Braverman notes that an American Nobel Prize-winning economist, Kenneth Arrow of Stanford University, who is Jewish, chose to quote the ancient Jewish sage, Hillel, in the opening of one of his economics books.

"He quoted three of Hillel's famous sayings and noted how applicable they were to economic practice today. 'If I am not for myself, who will be for me?' That means individual responsibility. 'If I am only for myself, who am I?' That means collective action. 'If not now, when?' That means taking positive action."

Says Braverman: "We're coming to a period, maybe, of benevolent capitalism or some kind of social democracy. I don't know what but we are in the process of something. If we were guided only by 'If I am not for myself, etc.' then our society would be in danger. We have to work together."

Israel could be a place where some new kind of social contract is devised, balancing the free-market engine with voluntarism and government policies that would make for a fairer distribution of resources. It may happen in Israel because this is one country that

cannot afford to have a dysfunctional society.

His concern for social cohesion leads Braverman to call for far greater emphasis on Jewish studies, from history to the writings of Shalom Aleichem. "I'm very worried about the extent of ignorance in these matters. If our people lack a connection to their history and culture, we are in danger of a tremendous brain drain. Our graduates can find work anywhere in the world if they don't feel connected here. We have to create a society people feel part of."

Since he has recently begun talking publicly about such matters, says the university president, he has received strong feedback from his audiences, indicating that they share his feeling that the Free-Market Super Express is not the bus Israel should be boarding. "There is a general feeling that something is wrong," he says. "Greed is not enough."

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The new peace processors of Tel Aviv and Cairo

It is hard to find anyone at the State Department with a bad word to say about Edward "Ned" Walker or Daniel Kurtzer. Both men are as universally respected for their professionalism, decency and knowledge of the Middle East. Former assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs Robert Pelletreau calls them "two of the most qualified, brightest diplomats in the US foreign service."

Walker, 57, presented his credentials to President Ezer Weizman on Wednesday as the new ambassador in Tel Aviv. And Kurtzer, 48, arrives in Cairo in early January to take up his first ambassadorship, thus becoming, as far as anyone in Washington can tell, the first Jew to represent the US in Egypt — and an Orthodox one, at that. The man Kurtzer is succeeding in Egypt is Walker.

IT IS 24 years since Ned Walker left Israel after serving as a political officer with the embassy.

Walker is unsure what role he would be asked to play in peace negotiations, if any. But he is no stranger to dealing with Israel and the Palestinians, having been a top aide to Robert Strauss and Sol Linowitz, president Carter's envoys during the autonomy talks that followed the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt.

Of current negotiations, Walker says he is "morally certain" the US doesn't want to dictate peace terms to Israel and that Washington has no "preconceived notion" of what a final-status arrangement should look like.

Walker is reluctant to discuss the current difficulties in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, claiming he is "freshly minted" and has observed developments only from the outside. Likewise, he says he doesn't like "taking the temperatures" of the state of US-Israeli relations because "like every living entity, they go up and down."

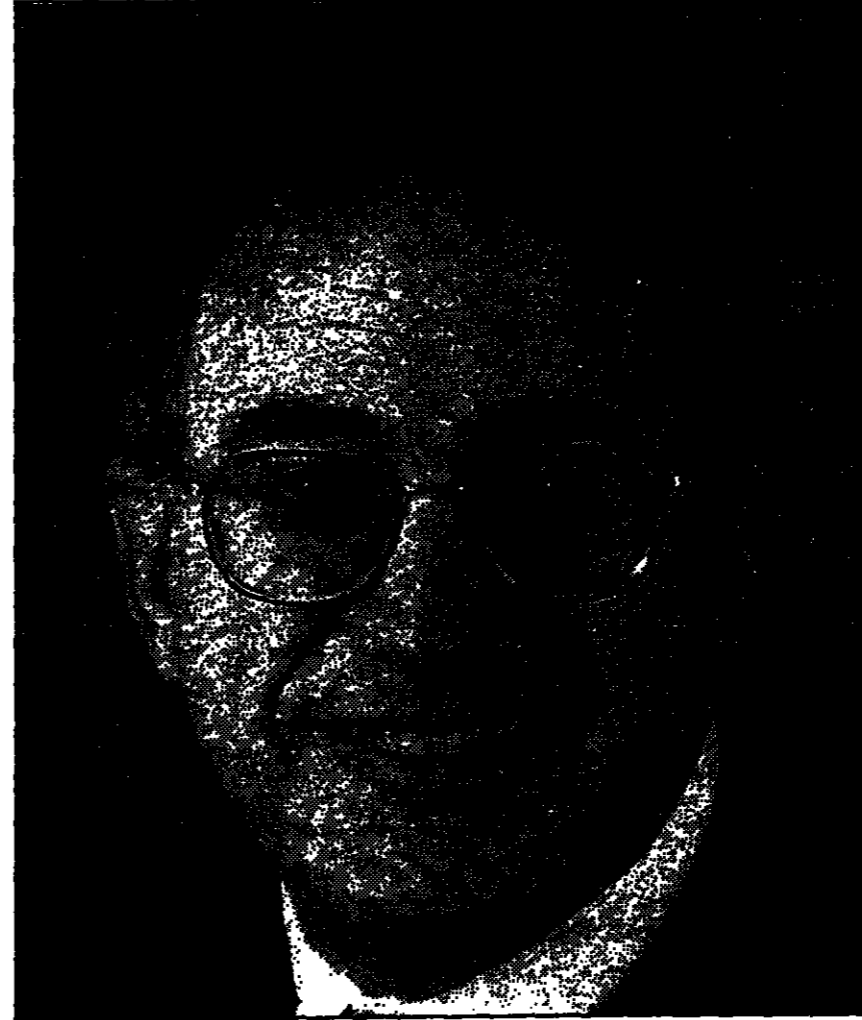
"All I know is that the relationship is firm. It's sound. I intend to work with the government of Israel to improve it further and to try and find some of the answers to the problems that have vexed the region," he says.

"Our relationship is very broad and complex, and it's incumbent on the ambassador to look at the entire relationship. There are areas of trade, scientific cooperation, the whole array of defense cooperation. All of these are very important elements of the overall fabric.

Two old hands at Middle East peace negotiations have been appointed as US ambassadors to Israel and Egypt. How does Edward Walker's view on moving the US embassy to Jerusalem differ from that of his predecessor? And what are the priorities of Daniel Kurtzer, the first Jew to represent the US in Egypt? Hillel Kuttler reports



Edward Walker: 'I'm not going to be a one-issue ambassador.'



Daniel Kurtzer: A diplomat who is 'focused on the art of the possible.'

I'm not going to be a one-issue ambassador."

One issue where Walker already stands apart from the man he succeeds is on moving the US embassy to Jerusalem. Whereas former ambassador Martin Indyk was opposed to such a move arguing it could torpedo peace talks, Walker speaks of it as a possibility once a final peace agreement is reached.

"The president has indicated

that he will adhere to the law," he says. "It will be my responsibility to ensure that if that is the president's decision it can be done. And I will do it. If [the law] also has a provision that if the national security interests of the US are affected the president can waive it. I'm not suggesting that that will be necessary because by then we're supposed to have a final agreement, and under the conditions of the final agreement it

ought to be clear where the embassy will be," Walker says.

Does Walker believe that the thorniest issues can be resolved within the time limit set by the Oslo Accords, or in about 18 months?

He replies: "Two weeks before Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem, I wouldn't have believed that in a year-and-a-half you'd have a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. So I have learned never to second-guess the Middle East."

Walker relates that as he was leaving Cairo an Egyptian gave him a coin. "On the face of the coin was a picture of Anwar Sadat and a dove. And he said, 'Anytime you get frustrated or discouraged, just pull out the coin and remember that nobody believed it was possible.' So why should I say that it's not possible to do it in a year-and-a-half?"

"It's an awful lot of detailed work that needs to be done for any negotiation like this," continues Walker. "It's highly technical stuff. It takes time, particularly when you deal with things like security, water — issues that are highly complex even without the politics. So if you've had an opportunity to go over the ground before, it helps," he states, referring to the autonomy talks he was involved in nearly two decades ago.

Walker has served throughout the Arab world: Beirut, Tunis, Damascus, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Cairo. While ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, Walker developed close relations with the emigre Palestinian community. During Operation Desert Storm, with the emir requesting reinforcements against Iraq, Walker performed what he considers one of his most satisfying jobs. "Bringing the [US] Air Force to Abu Dhabi was a complex diplomatic task that we were able to achieve with minimal problems in a country that hadn't had any relationship with US forces before. It was gratifying to help it take place," he says.

In his last year of service in Israel, Martin Indyk was a central player in Israeli-Palestinian talks. But he also rankled some right-wingers who accused him of inappropriate involvement in Israeli politics.

Asked whether he would steer clear of such controversies, Walker dismisses the premise that Indyk was meddling. He knows he will be relied on as a conduit between Washington and Jerusalem. He believes he can best assist the policy makers by working "to make sure that we understand fully what Prime Minister [Binyamin] Netanyahu is thinking and the problems he faces, his preferences, so that there's no confusion in our position." There is also the role of assisting him to know what he believes is related to the process, based on our contacts with other parties...

"It's clear that we have a desire to see the process move forward and not be stalemated or step backwards," adds Walker. "To do that, we need to get an agreement on the FRD [further redeploy-

ment] and we need to get an agreement on moving to the final-status talks."

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright holds Walker in high regard from when he served as her deputy at the UN mission in 1993 and 1994. It was only because he was in line for the top job at the Cairo embassy — the US's largest — that Albright let Walker leave. Walker refers to her to this day as Madeleine.

Andrew Marks, who worked with Walker on the autonomy talks, calls him "perfectly fair, open-minded and very sympathetic to Israel. He's been very credible as a representative of the US, in dealing with Arab negotiators. I was there for conversations, late-night meetings, where people could reveal their true feelings as opposed to their public persona, and believe me, there were frustrations. But never did I hear Ned utter anything against Israel's security or other needs."

When they worked together with Carter envoy Linowitz, says Marks, Walker was "incredibly adept, patient and absolutely tireless in finding the right formulation to capture agreements that were there, where the parties didn't realize they had a meeting of the minds."

Walker says he is sure one thing remains unchanged in the country he knew as a younger man: Israelis dearly want peace.

Walker says he was disappointed that his labors failed to produce an agreement on Palestinian autonomy at the time, but feels that he helped blaze the trail for the landmark Israeli-Palestinian accords reached many years later, in 1993.

"In retrospect, a lot of the work that was done then helped prepare the Egyptians and the Palestinians and the Israelis for the subsequent negotiations around Oslo, and probably shortened the length of those negotiations by a year," he says. "A lot of the principled issues that had been dealt with in the autonomy talks were more easily resolved with that kind of background. So even though it's frustrating, you never know."

Walker's links with Israel are also personal. It is where he met his wife, Wendy Griffiths, when she worked for the British Embassy, at a Friday "happy hour" at the Marine guard post on the roof of the American Embassy. They were married in 1973 at St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. Walker's best man was then-

embassy colleague Edward Abington, who was recently the US consul-general in Jerusalem.

Walker has also seen some Arab-Israeli violence from up close. While studying Hebrew at Ulpan Akiva in 1970, Walker says he spent three days picking grapefruit at Kibbutz Ashdod Ya'acov. "There was an attack on the field one time," he recalls. "We had to get out of the trees. And then an F-4 came along and bombed a location in Jordan."

The Walker family is in Israel this week for Christmas. Afterwards his son Christopher returns to a boarding school in the US and Wendy goes back to Cairo with their daughter Kathryn while she finishes high school.

Walker is still conversant in Hebrew. He even hopes to give speeches in Hebrew, although he's not quite so confident about answering questions. He intends to brush up on his skills by studying with a tutor for 45 minutes each morning before work.

Walker says he is sure one thing remains unchanged in the country he knew as a younger man: Israelis dearly want peace. "This includes a secure life, a better life for your children — very human emotions," he explains. "It is that kind of peace, one in which you can see your kids go out to the local coffee shop and not worry about them getting blown up, that has to be the vision that we all strive for. That's what I hope would be our objective, and not something about which doubts are left about the right to live in peace and security, on any side."

WALKER'S CAREER intersected briefly with Kurtzer's when Kurtzer was posted in Cairo and Walker was involved in negotiating studies with Strauss and Linowitz, during the autonomy talks.

"What was striking even then was the fact that he was one of the early examples of people who in a sense were cross-fertilizing. The big issues back in the '70s were how to get the State Department into a mode in which service both in Israel and the Arab world would make sense in terms of a wider Middle East experience. Until then it was a difficult proposition because there was a perception that if you served in one you couldn't do well in the other place," Kurtzer says of Walker.

Kurtzer's and Walker's own careers illuminate how the State Department's approach has changed.

Kurtzer had his first overseas posting in Cairo.

FOR SIX years, as part of a small circle of what former secretary of state James Baker referred to as his "Peace Processors," Kurtzer was closely involved with the Palestinian track.

There were several occasions when the negotiations came close to clashing with his religious observance. In October 1991, invitations to the Madrid peace conference were issued just before the start of Shabbat.

In another instance, Aaron Miller (another observant Jew on

the US peace team) and Kurtzer decided while on a shuttle with Baker not to accompany him to Damascus when he flew on Yom Kippur. They remained behind at the King David Hotel.

Kurtzer and his wife Sheila intend to maintain their observances while in Cairo, but he has no interest in being a symbol. Kurtzer wants to entertain regularly, to have people "enjoy good food and a good time" and "have a place where they can come and talk" and not even realize that everything is kosher.

"How we conduct ourselves is going to be very personal," he explains. "We do intend to remain faithful to the way we've lived until now. What I'm not going out to do is to build a kosher kitchen so that I can project to the world: 'You see, it can be done.'"

The official US supply route ensures that the Kurtzers have kosher food available. He will no longer have to endure a situation such as during his first rotation in Egypt, when boxes of kosher chickens, delivered on a US plane from Israel, fell onto the tarmac at Cairo Airport and broke open, drawing the attention of security officers.

The opposition press in Egypt has already picked on Kurtzer for his religion, as it did when he served as a political officer there from 1979 to 1982. Kurtzer hopes that that will stop.

"I hope we can conduct that discourse on a level which is commensurate with its importance, which means my respect for other people's views, their respect for my views," he says.

The incoming ambassador's primary responsibility is to strengthen the US's "strategic partnership" with Egypt and not allow strains of the past few years to fester.

"Every bilateral relationship has problems in it," he says. "Sure, I have to work on the 10 percent that may not be going so smoothly, but I also have to do preventive maintenance on the other 90%."

Egypt's alliance with the US during the Gulf War is "the most dramatic example" of how vital their relations are, but hardly an exception, he emphasizes.

"When we are moving peace-keeping or humanitarian assistance to Africa, where do those planes go through or over? Egypt — in significant numbers. When our warships have to transit from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, they've got to go through Egypt, otherwise you're talking 10 days to two weeks' delay and unbelievable costs.

"When you get an ally like Egypt that's prepared to work with you because they share your goals, and you work cooperatively to facilitate strategic movements and tactical movements of your troops, the value is immeasurable," Kurtzer adds.

Aaron Miller, the US's deputy Middle East coordinator who worked with Kurtzer on the peace process team for six years and is a close friend, says Kurtzer's eye is "not on the art of the probable — why things would not happen — but on the art of the possible."

"To Dan [the glass was not half full or half-empty, but filling]," Miller says. "His mind — and this is his true brilliance — sees relationships in how they can be changed and altered for the better. Dan has an extraordinary capacity for dealing with people. In this business, personal contacts and credibility are critical... Dan is a master at listening to people. Not sympathizing with them, but empathizing with them."

Kurtzer was one of the central American conceptualizers of the Madrid conference and the negotiations later launched in Moscow.

"The amount of listening we did, and trying to deal with the fears and problems and difficulties that each party brought to the table [is] the validation of what I truly believe, which is that hard work is necessary," Kurtzer says.

Kurtzer cites Madrid and his diplomatic role in helping then deputy secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger keep Israel out of the Gulf War as among his most memorable achievements.

Edward Djerejian, a former ambassador to Israel and State Department chief of Near East affairs, recalls a chat with Kurtzer shortly before Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Washington to sign the groundbreaking Declaration of Principles with Israel in 1993.

It was Sunday, September 12, the day before the signing ceremony that took place on the White House lawn. Djerejian was about to depart for Andrews Air Force Base to greet Arafat as he arrived from Tunis. He called Kurtzer into his office.

"He said, 'What's up, boss?'" Djerejian relates. "I said, 'I want you to try to kiss me.'" He said, 'What?' I said, 'Arafat will come off the plane and want to kiss me. I have to figure out a way to avoid being hugged. We can't have that for the first photo opportunity.'"

"We worked out a system where my left hand would touch his shoulder and at the same time, I would extend my right hand. [Arafat] did try to embrace me, and it worked!"

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'You can't put Humpty-Dumpty together'

The pacification of Bosnia has consumed billions of dollars and occupied tens of thousands of diplomats, soldiers and aid workers. But there are serious doubts whether the ultimate goal, a multi-ethnic state, is possible, Lee Hockstader writes

Workers roll into the bombed-out village of Dizdarsa every morning to rebuild house No. 141, demolished during Bosnia's war. The idea is to allow the former occupant, a Moslem refugee, to come home now that the fighting has been over for two years.

By all appearances, the work here, in a suburb of the northern city of Brcko, should be proceeding under a comforting umbrella of American security. This part of northern Bosnia, contested by Moslems and Serbs, is administered by a US diplomat and parolled by heavily armed US troops.

Despite all the security, something is amiss in Dizdarsa. Every other night someone - Serbs, say the workmen - comes and trashes house No. 141 again. Across the street, another house set for a Moslem refugee's return had its new roof shingles blown off by a hand grenade. A couple of workmen have been beaten up.

As the reconstruction of house No. 141 goes, so goes the outlook for stable peace and reconciliation in Bosnia, two years after Moslem, Serb and Croat leaders agreed to end the country's 43-month war. The pacification of Bosnia, a tortuous process spearheaded by the US, has consumed billions of the West's dollars and occupied tens of thousands of its diplomats, soldiers and aid workers.

As NATO officials begin discussions of the nature and future role of a NATO-led force, there are serious concerns over whether the foundation of its mission - the creation of a multi-ethnic state - remains a viable blueprint for Bosnia's future.

Since the warring armies were separated by NATO peacekeepers two years ago, the peace process has produced only modest, and usually tenuous, gains toward inter-ethnic reconciliation, according to foreign and local sources interviewed here in the past few weeks.

Nearly everyone agrees that few, if any, of the positive developments - the scattered but accelerating return of refugees to areas where they are in the minority, the ethnic integration of a handful of local police forces and town councils - would survive the withdrawal of the 31,000 troops under NATO command in the Stabilization Force for Bosnia.

Even as Western officials rail against Bosnia's entrenched, obstructionist hard-line leaders in the three main ethnic groups, they have achieved little that changes the war's essential legacy of ethnic partition. Some foreign officials concede privately that despite all the ringing diplomatic pronouncements about knocking down the walls of segregation and promoting freedom of movement, the West's real goal in Bosnia is stability, not reintegration of a society traumatized by bloodshed and hatred. Few diplomats, and almost no Bosnians, say it is possible to resurrect anything resembling Bosnia's prewar multi-ethnic society.

"The issue here is cost reduction - how can we solve the problem so there's a minimum foreign presence in the long run?" said a Western diplomat with long experience in Bosnia. "It's not about re-making a multi-ethnic society. You can't put Humpty Dumpty together again."

IT IS against this background that senior officials in the Clinton administration and Europe are arguing for an extended role for the NATO force after its 18-month mandate runs out at the end of June. If the United States withdraws its 8,000 troops by July, as President Clinton promised last year and some in Congress favor, the European allies say they will follow suit. A withdrawal almost certainly will ignite a fresh war that, quite possibly, could spread to neighboring Balkan states.

Conversely, if some version of the peacekeeping force remains in Bosnia, it likely will be able to keep the peace. What is less clear is whether the huge international presence will be able, or has the political will, to reshape the country.

In the peace agreement hammered out by US diplomats in Dayton, Ohio, two years ago, the West committed itself to a paradox. On the one hand, there was to be a unitary Bosnia consisting of two halves: the Moslem-Croat Federation and the Serb Republic. On the other, the accord granted a large measure of autonomy to each half, leaving only a small central government.

That awkward diplomatic construct recognized the reality on the ground: "Ethnic cleansing" had

separated at the end of the 1992-95 war. It also preserved prewar borders and denied the territorial ambitions of neighboring Serbia and Croatia, each of which wanted to slice off a chunk of Bosnia to create a greater national territory for itself.

The resulting tension at the heart of the Dayton peace accord - between a Bosnia that is ethnically integrated and one that is ethnically partitioned - has bedeviled the West ever since.

The nub of the problem is that the integrationist elements of Dayton, which aim to build some semblance of a unitary state, are stunningly difficult to implement. In some respects, the West has balked at using its muscle to force the sides to accept a unitary state. Yet some of the problems do not lend themselves to resolution by force.

Across the Interethnic Boundary Line, which divides the two halves of Bosnia, no sports are played and no professional organizations for teachers, doctors or engineers convene. Even the Red Cross chapters barely speak to each other. The Serb member of the collective presidency, Momcilo Krajinik, agrees to attend occasional meetings with his Moslem and Croat counterparts only under intense Western coercion.

In a society stoked by incendiary media and inflamed by nationalist politicians, people have few ways

as well as a public outcry, the plan is being re-examined for next year's academic calendar. Yet deep divisions remain in what children of different ethnic groups are taught.

In some parts of central Bosnia inhabited by roughly equal numbers of Moslems and Croats, towns remain split as they were during the war.

The problem is not one for NATO peacekeepers to resolve. But diplomats and local aid officials are confounded by it, and as often as not they simply throw up their hands.

"In the villages where I work, there might be a Croat mayor and a Moslem head of the municipal assembly," said Davorin Pavelic, a Croat veteran who now works on aid and reconstruction projects for International Management Group, which helps coordinate aid programs for local organizations.

"When they receive a delegation from the international community, they sit together. But when the meeting ends they're going back to their own buildings and dealing just with their own national groups."

Although there has been undeniable progress in the past year, and especially in the past few months, nearly every apparent step forward must be couched in caveats:

- It is now possible to see some Serb license plates on cars in the mostly Moslem city of Sarajevo and a few Moslem or Croat license plates in the Serb town of Banja Luka. But despite months of Western pressure, the three sides have not agreed on ethnically neutral license plates, which would promote freedom of movement.

- Aggressive NATO moves since the summer have weakened the grasp of hard-liners in the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia by depriving them of police stations, broadcasting towers and the venter of impunity. But despite the tough new stance, the Serb, Moslem and Croat-controlled parts of Bosnia are no closer to agreeing on a common flag, currency, passport or refugee-return policy.

- Although it can still take hours to put a call through, limited telephone service has been restored between the Serb- and Moslem-Croat-controlled halves of Bosnia. But Serb authorities still refuse to accept Moslem and Croat mail.

- There is plenty of interest in a new UN program promising injections of Western cash to towns that allow minorities to return to their homes. But despite more than \$7 million in international funds spent or pledged since spring, and a good deal of reconstruction in progress, only a couple of hundred refugees have returned to their homes this year under the program, known as Open Cities. International refugee agencies concede that NATO troops cannot accompany every refugee family back to its home, let alone stay to keep watch after it settles.

OVERALL, JUST 20,000 Bosnians dared return to their shattered houses in areas controlled by another ethnic group this year - twice last year's number but a fraction of the hundreds of thousands of such refugees still stranded in Germany, Yugoslavia, Croatia and within Bosnia.

"Anything that takes place here is entirely artificial, and any progress that has been made here is extremely fragile," said a diplomat in Brcko who has monitored the internationally orchestrated return of Moslems to Dizdarsa and other villages south of Brcko.

If not for the heavy presence of US troops, he said, local Serbs would chase away Moslems who have returned to the area, a nar-



An American member of the NATO security forces on patrol in the 'zone of separation' near Brcko, in northern Bosnia. If not for the heavy presence of US troops, local Serbs would chase away Moslems who have returned to their homes, says a diplomat who monitors the area. (AP)

Across the Interethnic Boundary Line, which divides the two halves of Bosnia, no sports are played and no professional organizations for teachers, doctors or engineers convene. Even the Red Cross chapters barely speak to each other

row, strategically vital ribbon of land connecting the eastern and western halves of Serb territory. The Serbs regard any Moslem presence in the area as a potential military threat that could divide the Serb territory if war resumes.

"All they have to do is blow up a few houses and the 2,000 Moslems who have returned would go back to the [Moslem-controlled] federation," said the diplomat.

The NATO force has acted more aggressively to rein in Bosnian Serb hard-liners. After extensive negotiations with US diplomats, 10 Bosnian Croat war crimes suspects were persuaded to give themselves up for trial before the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

But NATO troops have balked at going after most Bosnian Serb war crimes suspects, including Radovan Karadzic, former president of the Serb Republic, where he still exercises considerable influence.

Despite the enormous powers they were granted under the Dayton accord, Western diplomats have not foisted solutions on

factions locked in protracted fights over a common currency, flag and other such issues.

In Pale, the stronghold of the Bosnian Serb hard-liners, officials cling to a theology of ethnic partition, doing everything they can to block plans to integrate police officers and judges in their territory.

The Serb leadership in Pale installed a handful of Serb families in Dizdarsa to form what diplomats called a "biological line," designed to block Moslem refugees from returning.

Diplomats say the families - nearly all of whom had lost a relative in the war - were picked to ensure that Moslems would get a frosty reception.

"I don't even want to see them," said Sanka Veljancic, 56, who said her son, a Serb fighter, was killed by a Moslem sniper in Sarajevo at the war's outset. "I won't go back to living with them."

THE BOSNIAN Serb leadership is not unique in its intransigence. In the divided city of Mostar, Ivan

Prskalo, the Croat mayor of the city's western half, has refused to adopt even the vaguest plan for Moslems to return to their homes in his jurisdiction. He also has not reinstated 86 Moslems expelled from his half of the city last year, despite Western pressure.

The Bosnian Moslem leadership, although it pays lip service to ethnic integration, has been no more accommodating. In Sarajevo, for instance, the Moslem-dominated government effectively has blocked most Serbs, who comprised 30 percent of the city's prewar population, from returning to their apartments. The federation cabinet's move disregarded Dayton's provisions guaranteeing all refugees the right to return home.

"I don't see a future for Bosnia as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious country," said Pavelic, the aid worker. "The same people started this war, finished the war and are being reelected to govern. They have general support for their policy of breaking up Bosnia-Herzegovina."

(The Washington Post)



A STATEMENT OF PARTNERSHIP AND CONCERN



The Municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, and the Los Angeles Jewish community have launched a new people-to-people partnership to assure the future of the Israel-Diaspora relationship into the 21st century.

The members of the partnership Steering Committee which directs this partnership believe that the future of the Jewish people depends upon the maintenance of a strong bond between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora.

The relationship and interdependence must never be taken for granted. It must be nurtured and developed. A healthy relationship requires us to respect one another and to develop a better understanding of each other's interests and concerns. We must stimulate opportunities for us to meet, to get to personally know each other, and to appreciate our joint unity and our Jewish destiny.

In recent months, this relationship has become strained. The proposed Conversion Law legislation pending in the Knesset has created anger and frustration among many Jews of the Diaspora. Many Diaspora Jews feel that their commitment to Judaism and to Israel is being questioned.

We strongly believe that this law must not be enacted in order to maintain the unity of the Jewish people.

- Roni Milo Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yafo
- Herbert Glaser Co-Chairman, Los Angeles
- Herb Gelfand President, L.A. Federation
- Nathan Wolloch Co-Chairman and First Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yafo

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Having heard from their friends about the wonderful two-day tour to the Negev - FROM ABRAHAM TO BEN-GURION: DREAMS, VISIONS, REALITY - which took place a couple of weeks ago, many people have called the organizers, Shorashim and The Jerusalem Post Travel Club, for information.

Because it was such a great trip, and in order to satisfy the many readers who have heard about it, we are planning to repeat it in the early spring, before Pessah.

WATCH THIS SPACE!

Smashing plates for peace

Dry Bones

One has to give credit to the Greeks, the inventors of dialogue, diplomacy, reason and bacchanalian revelry, for bringing them all together and presenting them as a gift to Israeli and Palestinian legislators in Athens last week.

Those members of the coalition who oppose the Oslo process might view the gift as a Trojan horse, but for those who were looking for a way to break through the psychological defenses of the other side, as well as their own, it was more like an intensive encounter session, the kind of thing which, until a year ago, only leftists did.

The encounter included 10 members of the government coalition, two Labor Party members and 18 Palestinians. It was billed as the "Second Athens Meeting on the Future of the Peace Process in the Middle East" — the first meeting having taken place in July — and it was hosted by the Greek Foreign Ministry and organized by the Tel Aviv-based International Center for Peace in the Middle East.

The purpose of the encounter was not to make decisions, but to encourage dialogue and socializing between the governing coalition and Palestinians, and thus create the kind of rapport the Oslo architects had hoped to create during the interim period, to make tackling the tough issues in the final-status talks a bit easier.

This meeting was deemed far more successful than the earlier one, with the two sides managing to agree on a 10-point joint declaration that pressed their respective leaderships to advance the peace

The conviviality at the recent four-day meeting between Israelis and Palestinians in Athens might lull one into believing that their decades-old conflict could be resolved over a few good meals, Jon Immanuel writes

process, to avoid unilateral actions, to establish a joint monitoring committee and encourage freedom of movement.

But that the tough issues will remain tough no matter how relaxed the venue was demonstrated at the very beginning, with a head-to-head confrontation on the issue of Jerusalem. The Likud's Meir Sheerit told his counterparts on the Palestinian side that if they want a state, they should forget about Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been the capital of Israel, "not since Camp David but since King David," Sheerit said.

To which Sufian Abu Zayde, head of the Palestinians' People to People committee, responded, "You say David and Solomon were kings, but we say they were prophets, even more important than kings."

That basically ended that discussion; both sides realized no good could come of debating the truths of Judaism and Islam, and, in any case, no one was ready to define exactly what constitutes "Jerusalem."

There were other issues where bridging the gap seemed impossible. Most of the Israelis tended to view issues like "Hamas,"

"security" and "Jerusalem," as immutable. "I believe in Palestinian democracy, but what will happen if Hamas wins the elections?" asked Emanuel Zissmann of the Third Way.

"The PLO today is not the same PLO as a few years ago, so Hamas tomorrow may not be the same as today," responded Jamil Zakout, director-general of the PA Civil Affairs Ministry.

The Israelis did not seem convinced. The Palestinians, on the other hand, took a hard line on "the illegality of all settlements" and "the 1967 borders." In an attempt to test Palestinian flexibility, Sheerit asserted that only the Right could make concessions on settlements and borders. But the Palestinians refused to rise to the bait, which would have appeared to draw them into negotiations, obviously not their task.

IN THE spirit of an encounter group, Palestinians took in good humor everything the Israelis threw at them in the discussions, and vice versa. So convivial were the proceedings, that it was easy to fall prey to the illusion that everything might be resolved over a good meal — and there were many.

Pini Badash of Tsomet huddled with Marwan Barghouti, Fatah chief in the West Bank. Zissmann said out loud, "This Sufian is, I have to admit, a jolly good fellow."

In assessing the progress made between the first meeting in July and this meeting, Barghouti noted that Zissmann "had refused to listen [in July], but this time he opened up. This is progress."

Barghouti also was impressed that when two members of Likud-Gesher-Tsomet, Yehuda Lankri and Sheerit, expressed support for a Palestinian state "no one opposed it."

It did not seem to matter that the two had linked their support for a Palestinian state to a Palestinian renunciation of claims to Jerusalem, and that both coalition and opposition participants had said to forget the Jordan Valley "for security reasons," though Riyad Malki, a former member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, did note that the Israelis "talk of security on the Jordan River as though they have no peace with Jordan."

Both sides largely agreed that security was not the only reason for the closures of the territories,

which seemed to be the most serious issue for the Palestinians right now. In fact, the call to "lift closures" and allow for "freedom of movement" were the most concrete parts of the joint declaration.

Some participants were surprised by the liberal position taken on the closures by Likud participants, compared with that of Labor's Haim Ramon, who said "the closure is only bad if there is no compensation for it. But if it actually allowed economic development it would be a good thing."

This comment infuriated the Palestinians, who saw it as contradicting the meaning of the Oslo Accords.

"When we signed the Paris Agreement [the economic part of the Oslo Accords] in 1994, which made our cost of living so dependent on the Israeli economy, it was understood that the number of Palestinians working in Israel would increase after a peace agreement," said Anis al-Qaq, assistant deputy minister of the Palestinian Authority Planning Ministry.

But what has happened, al-Qaq said, is that repeated closures have reduced the number of Palestinian workers in Israel. "The high cost of living was to have been compensated for by high Israeli wages," he said. "What we have now is a high cost of living without the high wages."

The differences between Labor "dovishness" and Likud "hawkishness" were blurred in other ways. For example, while the Likud delegates spoke of reaching a final settlement in three years, Ramon doubted it would be possible for at least 15 years, arguing that it would take that long for Israelis to overcome their security complex.

IN ATHENS, however, the only people with a security complex seemed to be the Greeks, who vetoed the Israeli side's idea of bringing everyone to the critical Maccabi Tel Aviv basketball game against Olympiakos on Thursday evening, the first day of the conference. Still, the Palestinians found the Israeli side of the conference table almost empty that afternoon.

The Israelis atoned for their antisocial behavior the next night at the Moustakas restaurant. Labor MK Avi Yehezkel and Sheerit took up guitars and led the company with "Heveinu Shalom Aleichem."

The Palestinians joined in politely, but refused to dance, following the lead of Faisal Hussein, who, though friendly as always, resisted attempts to make him dance.

Ramon, a former interior minister, shouted jovially at one Palestinian journalist who'd had difficulty renewing his Jerusalem identity card, that he would take it back if he didn't sing. The journalist, trained in theater, saw the wry humor of the situation, got up, did an impromptu Zorba's dance with his Israeli colleagues, smashed a plate, and got the Palestinians to embarrass the Israelis with a spirited rendition of "Biladi, Biladi," the Palestinian national anthem. Some of the Israelis, now on the social defensive, coughed but joined in.

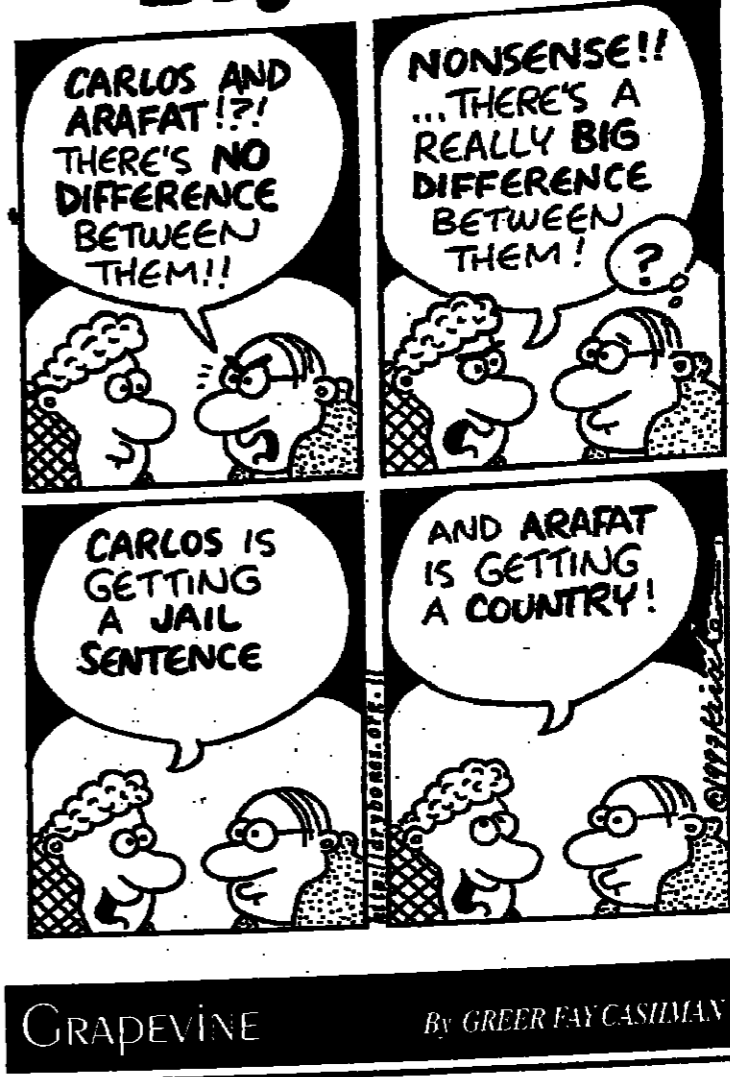
(The Greek diners looked on in wonder when the plate hit the floor. Greeks now consider themselves polite Europeans since joining the European Union and don't smash plates in restaurants anymore.)

In contrast to the free-wheeling political discussions throughout the four-day conference, during the social events the Palestinians were more reserved with the Israelis than the Israelis were with them. They were more self-conscious about having a good time. "This you wouldn't see in Gaza today," said Abu Zayde, after another boisterous evening in a Greek nightclub.

THAT THE joint statement said nothing about condemning violence or terrorism — which was to lead to criticism of the communiqué back home — bothered only a few of the participants. Many felt the call to "embark on programs of education for peace" compensated for the omission. The Palestinians had insisted on linking the issue of terror with that of settlements or dropping both issues from the declaration — implying, of course, that building in the settlements is considered equal in gravity to terror.

But the fact that they were able to formulate a joint declaration was in itself considered an accomplishment, particularly since none had been issued after the July meeting. Most participants considered it a condition for future meetings.

David Tal of Shas, who was attending for the first time, said he would welcome future meetings, and Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos promised to arrange another. Tal noted his own transformation as a result of the meetings. "If you had told me a year ago I would sit with Palestinians, [some of whom had spent from five to 18 years in jail on security charges], I would have said 'no.' Shas voters would categorically have said 'no.'"



Top man: WZO chairman Avraham Burg with his dreidel collection, exhibited at Beth Hatefutsoth.

Holiday originals

Artists and artisans are vying to create new designs for Jewish ritual objects, and for Hanukka they keep coming up with more and more novelty ideas for branched candleholders and dreidels. But Rami Bukra, the confectioner for the Tuxedo chain of caterers, has come up with the best idea yet — an edible *hanukkia* and stand, all made out of chocolate. Yum!

Hanukka dreidels are also subject to innovation. WZO chairman Avraham Burg, whose huge collection of dreidels could make your head spin, allowed Beth Hatefutsoth to exhibit his precious tops. At the exhibition, which opened on Tuesday, Burg has some 100 rare dreidels from all parts of the world, in addition to others which are more common. He had been persuaded by museum director David Alexander to put some 300 dreidels out on loan.

When Burg rose to speak at this week's World Zionist Congress, the first person he addressed was his father, Josef Burg. The elder statesman of the Zionist Movement attended his first Zionist Congress long before the younger Burg was born. The chairman's mother, Rivka, who is usually undemonstrative in public, was so impressed with his speech, that after her son resumed his seat, she leaned over and kissed him.

HONORED at the opening of the World Zionist Congress were Raya Jaglom and Jacques Torczyner, who between them have given close to 100 years of service to the World Zionist Organization. Torczyner, who has been a member of the WZO executive since 1972, attended his first Zionist Congress in 1935. Jaglom has been a member of the WZO executive for 34 years. Both were singled out for awards of gold and silver medallions, engraved with the famous image of Herzl gazing out from the balcony of his hotel in Basel, in recognition of their long service, vision and commitment to the Zionist enterprise. They were also given honorary life membership in the WZO. Though still active in many spheres, both have stepped down from their executive positions to make way for younger idealists.

AND ONE last item related to the World Zionist Congress. En route to Jerusalem, former Conference of Presidents chairman Seymour Reich and his wife, Cynthia, stepped off in Italy last weekend to visit a relative living in Florence. They were walking along one of the city's fashionable shopping streets when a limousine accompanied by a heavily armed police motorcade stopped close by. Expecting to see some Italian



CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Suspicious, if retiring and bashful (5)
- Leap with spirit in square-dancing for kids (9)
- Prepared to learn unknown amount (5)
- Are pub hours recorded in it? (5,4)
- Carry on with payment for services (4)
- Wielding guns I turn (5)
- Seabirds return with another variety (4)
- Trendy valet in trouble by accident (13)
- Reading between the lines, normally (8,5)
- Star part chosen by Bassanio (4)
- Circumference right after treatment? (5)
- Inclination to be crooked (4)
- Prepared tongue that makes one repeat (9)
- Dominion's true majesty (5)
- Secret USA invention they cut back... (9)
- Washington with range of knowledge to rouse? (5)

DOWN

- Handel wrote music for them in a burst of temper (9)
- Hilten country in which girl has an accident (7-2)
- Twice, you fail to finish this plaything (2-2)
- Alf, for example, showing old gold piece? (4-9)
- Feeling the chill, being one hundred years of age (4)
- Judge of delicate Mozart piece? (5)
- He, given any break, will be laughing (5)
- Agnostic? Goner, mixing in these groups! (13)
- Novelist in fine fettle (5)
- Dandies of British and French waters (5)
- Only one subject in this leisure area? (5,4)
- Many chats about Chichester, for example (9)
- City guides announced (5)
- Jelly eaten with a relish, mostly (5)
- Greek and Italian resolution (4)
- Mark out in a tie (4)

SOLUTIONS

PIECETOGETHER
 CEVTO QANTERING
 AITIAUORH
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 OVHUNUR
 TINGE OMTIASE
 VAAAR
 MANWARD AMARE
 AETOR
 FORDARDS EVILVER
 CGUYS GLEN
 HEADRESS AMEND
 ETERE
 SPALLINGGALLS

Yesterday's Quick Solution
 ACROSS: 1 Mowit, 4 Whisky, 9 Gonish, 10 Spurs, 11 Toll, 12 Notable, 13 Ask, 14 Oral, 16 Tact, 18 Woe, 20 Embrace, 21 Hale, 24 Kukri, 25 Decorum, 26 Rodent, 27 Swear.
 DOWN: 1 Mighty, 2 Usual, 3 Thaw, 5 Heatsie, 6 Sinner, 7 Yonder, 8 Shank, 13 Alstian, 15 Rebnied, 17 Beaker, 18 Weeds, 19 Former, 22 Agree, 23 Acts.

L'expression personnelle

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QUICK CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- Scorch (4)
- Gathers and compares (8)
- Surrender (5)
- Official at inquests (7)
- Greedy person (3)
- Officer of the law (9)
- Spanner (6)
- Dive (6)
- Portable bridge for embarking (9)
- Sorrowful (3)
- Unsuitably (7)
- Gangling (6)
- Taking no notice (8)
- Graceful bird (4)

DOWN

- Ensnare (5)
- Request (3)
- Supernatural (6)
- Poetic, effusive (7)
- Large blocks of flats (9)
- Garnets (anag) (7)
- Bargain (4)
- Type of plum (9)
- Eggnish, amusing (7)
- Available assets (7)
- Woodland deities (6)
- Large brown seaweed (4)
- Senior member of group (5)
- At this time (3)

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CERTIFIED NOVELL ADMINISTRATOR	10	40	Fri. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.	Jan. 9	Tue. & Thur., 6-9 p.m.	Feb. 24
HIGH-TECH SALES AND MARKETING	48	144	Mon. & Wed., 4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Apr. 20	Tue. & Thur., 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.	Apr. 21

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Jerusalem Area

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Jerusalem Area

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IMMANUEL CHURCH, 15 Beer Hofman, Tel. 03-6820654. Services: Saturday 11 a.m., Sunday at 10 a.m.

MORESHET YISRAEL - Conservative 4 Agron, Dr. Avraham Feder, Rabbi. Fri. Minha 4:30 p.m., Sat. Shabbat 7:00 a.m., Minha 3:45 p.m. Daily Minyan 7:00 a.m.

TEL AVIV-CHRISTIAN

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE (The Redeemed Christian Church of God), Worship Services 10:00 am Saturdays, Bible Study - 7:00 pm Wednesdays, Venue - 30 Levinsky Street (3rd floor) Tel Aviv. Tel. 050-940-777.

Immanuel Church, 15 Beer Hofman, Tel. 03-6820654. Services: Saturday 11 a.m., Sunday at 10 a.m.

WHERE TO GO

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WHERE TO GO

HEBREW UNIVERSITY, Tours of the Mount Scopus campus in English, daily Sun.-Thur. 11 a.m. from Bronman Reception Centre, Sherman Administration Building 4a, 9, 23, 26, 28. For info, call 882819.

HAIFA

WHAT'S ON IN HAIFA, dial 04-8374253.

TEL AVIV MUSEUM OF ART, Surrealist Prints from the Charles and Evelyn Kramer Collection. Rene Magritte. A centennial tribute, Jan Lievens. The Surrealists of Israel. Collections HELEN RUBINS of Isaac, Collections HELEN RUBINS of Stein Pavilion for Contemporary Art. Surroundings, group exhibition by British artists on personal and collective identity. Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tue.-Thu., 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Meyerhoff Art Education Center, Tel. 6919155-8.

ART GUIDE

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ART GUIDE

HAIFA

THE REUBEN AND EDITH HECHT MUSEUM (Haifa University), Permanent exhibition: The People of Israel in Eretz Yisrael + Phoenicians on the Northern Coast of Israel in the Biblical Period - Illness and Healing in Ancient Times + Impressions and the Jewish School of Paris. Open Sun., Mon., Wed., Thur. 10-4; Tue., 10-7; Fri. 10-1. Sat. 10-2. ADMISSION FREE.

ART GUIDE JERUSALEM

Museums

OLD YISHUV COURT MUSEUM, Life in the Jewish community in the Old City, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Saturday, December 27

Jerusalem: Hadassah Ein Kerem (internal, surgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology, ENT); Barur Holim (obstetrics); Shaare Zedek (pediatrics); Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Upper Nazareth: Clal Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0468. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Upper Nazareth: Clal Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0468. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE EMERGENCY PHARMACIES

Friday, December 26

Jerusalem: Kupat Holim Clal, Straus A, 3 Avigdor, 670-6660; Baisam, Salah E, Din, 627-2915; Shufat, Shufat Road, 581-0108; Dar Adawa, Herod's Gate, 628-2058.

Tel Aviv: Brit. 28 King George, 528-3791; Arcozoroff, 76 Arcozoroff, 523-0745.

Ramat Gan: Kfar Sava: Hadarim, Yosefat, Kfar Sava, 765-2520.

Netanya: Neot Shaked, Ezorim Commercial Center, 895-2484.

Haifa: Hanezel, 833-3312.

Kiryat Gat: Krayot, 1 Hahagana, Kiryat Beit, 872-1665.

Herzliya: Clal Pharm, Beit Merkazim, 6 Merkaz (nr. Sderot Hagalim), Herzliya Pituah, 955-8472, 955-8407. Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Upper Nazareth: Clal Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0468. Open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, December 27

Jerusalem: (day) Jaffa Gate, 628-3889; (evening) Super Pharmacy, Ma'aleh mail, 670-3260; (day and evening) Baisam, Salah E, Din, 627-2915; Shufat, Shufat Road, 581-0108; Dar Adawa, Herod's Gate, 628-2058; Tel Aviv: Grusso, 27 Sheinkin, 528-4791; Bass, 66 Fishman, 528-4791.

Tel Aviv: Superpharm Ramat Aviv, 40 Tiv midnight; Superpharm Ramat Aviv, 40 Einstein, Ramat Aviv, 841-3730; Superpharm London Ministara, 4 Sha'ul Haneichel, 696-0115.

Ramat Gan: Kfar Sava: (day) Silvia, 182 Wetzmann, Kfar Sava, 765-5581; (evening) Eden, 95 Ramatayim, Hod Hasharon, 746-4002.

Netanya: Clal Pharm, 60 Binyamin, 833-2091.

Haifa: Siel Square, 1 Shalom Aleichem, 823-5064.

Kiryat Gat: Superpharm, Halazyon, 44 Haparkim, Kiryat Beit, 877-9320.

Herzliya: Clal Pharm, Beit Merkazim, 6 Merkaz (nr. Sderot Hagalim), Herzliya Pituah, 955-8472, 955-8407. Open 10 a.m. to midnight.

GENERAL ASSISTANCE EMERGENCY PHARMACIES

Friday, December 26

Jerusalem: Shaare Zedek (internal); Hadassah Ein Kerem (surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics, ophthalmology, ENT); Barur Holim (obstetrics); Shaare Zedek (pediatrics); Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Saturday, December 27

Jerusalem: Hadassah Ein Kerem (internal, surgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology, ENT); Barur Holim (obstetrics); Shaare Zedek (pediatrics); Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Upper Nazareth: Clal Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0468. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

DUTY HOSPITALS

Friday, December 26

Jerusalem: Shaare Zedek (internal); Hadassah Ein Kerem (surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics, ophthalmology, ENT); Barur Holim (obstetrics); Shaare Zedek (pediatrics); Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Saturday, December 27

Jerusalem: Hadassah Ein Kerem (internal, surgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology, ENT); Barur Holim (obstetrics); Shaare Zedek (pediatrics); Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (internal, surgery). Netanya: Laniado.

Police 100

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 Beersheba * 6274787 Netanya * 9554444
 Beit She'an * 6521133 P. Tiro * 9311111
 Beit Shimon * 5753333 Rehovot * 9451333
 Dan Region * 6324444 Rishon * 9623333
 Eilat * 8612233 Safed * 9202333
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The following rights are some of what Israeli labor law demands that all workers in Israel receive regardless of nationality or legal status in the country.

Minimum Wage 2405 NIS for 186 hours of work per month (12.93 NIS per hour). As of 23.12.97 this is US\$680 a month (including allowance).

Travel Allowance Workers who pay their own transportation to work must be reimbursed by their employer for this expense up to 15.80 NIS per day.

Annual Vacation Every worker is entitled to 12 days of paid holiday a year (in addition to Shabbat).

Holidays After three months workers are entitled to 9 days off per year for religious holidays. If the holiday falls on Shabbat the worker is not paid for that holiday.

Recuperation Pay After one year every worker is entitled to 5 days of recuperation pay at the rate of 245 NIS per day.

Payment of Wages Workers salaries must be paid by the 10th of the following month.

Sick Pay Workers absent from work due to illness should be paid 75% of their salary (starting with the third day) upon presenting a doctors' note to their employer.

Severance Pay Workers fired after at least one year of work are entitled to be paid severance pay at the rate of one month's salary for each year worked.

Important to Know

- No employer is allowed to take your passport. If your passport is held against your wishes you can file a complaint with the police against your employer.
- No employer can deport a worker from Israel. Only the government can issue a deportation and force a worker to leave the country.
- Make sure that your employer is not taking illegal deductions from your salary. If you suspect this you can bring your salary slip to Kav La'Oved or the Labor Ministry to be examined.

If you have questions or think that your labor rights are being violated call Kav La'Oved. Sunday - Friday 12:00 - 17:00. Tel. 03-5102266, 5101366 Jerusalem: Monday to Thursday 16:00 - 18:00. Tel. 051-300804

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Hearts flutter at White Hart Lane

Fans eager to see Juergen Klinsmann in Spurs strip again

LONDON (AP) — It could be a scene from a movie. Juergen Klinsmann, captain of Germany's national soccer team, returns to the Tottenham club where he was a hero two years ago to rescue the team in their hour of need.

And he makes his debut against Spurs' local London rival, mighty Arsenal.

But this is for real. Klinsmann, who scored 29 league and cup goals in one season for Tottenham, is set to return to the lineup Sunday against the Gunners at White Hart Lane.

The 33-year-old striker, who also has played for Inter Milan, Monaco, Bayern Munich and Sampdoria, broke the hearts of the Spurs fans and angered owner Alan Sugar when he decided to use the escape clause in his contract and walked out on the club after only a year.

Now he has rejoined the club on a six-month contract until the end of the season.

Tottenham need him badly. Even after last Saturday's 3-0 victory over last place Barnsley, Tottenham are mired in the Premier League's relegation zone, third from last.

Klinsmann, who still has paperwork to finalize with Sampdoria, won't be named captain by Spurs' Swiss coach, Christian Gross. "I will give them a hand and do everything I can."

"I am used to taking responsibility. I am already captain of the German national team so to cope with pressure is not a problem. It is normal. Expectations are very high and it's a wonderful challenge."

While Klinsmann has to wait until Sunday, one imported player who hopes to be in action Friday is US international goalkeeper Brad Friedel, who finally has gained a work permit to play in England.

Three other clubs tried unsuccessfully to get a permit for the keeper and Liverpool only obtained one after an appeal.

Friedel had his first training session with his new teammates Tuesday and there is strong speculation that he will make his debut at home to Leeds today with the erratic David James relegated to the bench.

It would be a busy start for the American keeper. Fourth-place Leeds are tough to beat and that game is followed by a visit to ninth-place Newcastle, managed by Kenny Dalglish and with Colombian star Faustino Asprilla



PRODIGAL SON — Juergen Klinsmann shown here in his first stint at Tottenham. (AP)

in the lineup. It's traditional in England for clubs to play two games over the holiday period and there can be some major changes in the standings.

Even defending titlist Manchester United, who hold a 4-point lead over the Premier League standings, could drop to second after Sunday's game at

Coventry, if they have already lost at home to Everton today. The biggest threat to Alex Ferguson's team appear to be Roy Hodgson's Blackburn and Ruud Geulit's Chelsea.

Since the former Swiss national team and Inter Milan coach moved to Ewood Park this season, Blackburn have improved considerably after a mediocre performance last season when they finished 13th and spent a long spell in the relegation zone.

Like United, Rovers have lost only two league games and strikers Chris Sutton and Kevin Gallacher have struck a rich vein of form, scoring 20 league goals between them.

Today, they hope to score more at lowly Sheffield Wednesday and keep up the pressure on the Reds by beating Crystal Palace at home on Sunday.

Chelsea match United's goals tally of 45 but are five points behind having lost five games. Gullit's team scored a 4-1 victory at Sheffield Wednesday and will be confident of beating Wimbledon at home before visiting Southampton on Monday.

Arsenal, whose game at Wimbledon was abandoned halfway through Monday because of a floodlights failure, have a tricky home game against eighth-place Leicester today before taking on Spurs two days later.

Arsene Wenger's team has slipped to sixth having once led the standings and, now 13 points behind the leader, need a run of victories to get back into contention.

Another team that must start winning again are last place Barnsley, who are strongly expected to return to Division One after only one season in the top flight.

Danny Wilson's team, who have leaked 50 goals in 19 games, easily the worst of the 20 clubs, are three points adrift at the bottom and need to win at fellow struggler Bolton today before hosting Derby on Sunday.

Friday's other games are Crystal Palace-Southampton with both teams striving to stay clear of the relegation zone, and Derby-Newcastle, both trying to climb towards the leaders.

Middlesbrough and Nottingham Forest, level on points in Division One, have the chance to stay three points clear of their rivals today.

Bryan Robson's Boro goes to lowly Huddersfield and Dave Bassett's Forest host Swindon, who have slipped to seventh.

The only games tomorrow are in Scotland where new leader Rangers should stay top by beating Dundee United at home. Second place Celtic visit St. Johnstone while Hearts, who lost the leadership on Saturday by losing 5-2 at home to Rangers, goes to Dunfermline.

Team	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Man United	19	13	4	2	45	13	43
Blackburn	19	11	6	2	36	19	39
Chelsea	19	12	5	2	45	19	38
Leeds	19	10	4	5	28	19	34
Liverpool	18	9	4	5	31	17	31
Arsenal	18	8	6	4	32	21	30
Derby	19	8	5	6	23	27	29
Leicester	19	7	6	6	20	22	26
Newcastle	19	7	5	7	23	21	25
West Ham	19	8	1	10	25	31	25
Wimbledon	18	6	5	7	19	21	23
Aston Villa	19	6	4	9	20	22	22
Crystal Palace	19	5	6	8	17	25	21
Shef Wed	19	6	3	10	31	43	21
Southampton	19	6	2	11	23	29	20
Coventry	19	4	8	7	17	25	20
Bolton	19	4	8	7	16	29	20
Tottenham	19	5	4	10	17	27	19
Everton	19	4	5	10	17	27	17
Barnsley	19	4	2	13	17	50	14

SPORTS

in brief

Collimore charged with assault

Aston Villa striker Stan Collimore, one of the highest-profile players in the Premier League, has been charged with assault, police said yesterday.

Collimore, 26, formerly of Liverpool, was arrested in Cannock, Staffordshire, on Christmas Eve and released on bail pending an appearance before magistrates.

Lawsuit against Galipari dismissed

PATERSON, NJ (AP) — A judge on Wednesday dismissed a lawsuit filed by a sports writer against New Jersey Nets coach John Calipari and the Nets organization.

Dan Garcia of *The Star-Ledger* of Newark claimed in his lawsuit that he suffered "extreme humiliation and emotional distress" because Calipari called him "a Mexican idiot" after a team practice in Mahwah on March 20.

The lawsuit was dismissed because it lacked legal merit. "It was a commonsense decision that said the courts are not involved in a private conversation, even if it gets heated," a court official said.

How to pronounce 'Nagano'

TOKYO (AP) — NA-gano or Na-GA-no? That's the question many around the world are pondering as preparations for the 1998 Winter Olympics enter their final stage. Nagano officials say: We don't know either.

Conductors on Nagano train platforms stress the first syllable, announcing: "The bullet train will soon arrive at NA-gano station." Residents in the southern part of the prefecture refer to their home as Na-GA-no.

And national broadcasters are no help because they pronounce the city NA-GA-NO, giving equal emphasis to each syllable.

Grundman to manage Bnei Yehuda

Ya'acov (Yankale) Grundman was yesterday appointed manager of Bnei Yehuda in an effort to bring a change to the National League soccer club's waning fortunes. The Hatikva Quarter side are in a long slide, having failed to win in six matches since November 1. The situation is now critical, with club attendances falling and the team in 14th place.

Grundman, a native of the poor Hatikva Quarter and a star player with the club in the 1950s, has also served as coach of the national team.

In other news, the National League takes a break until January 24. Also, Itzik Zohar has said he wants to leave Premiership side Crystal Palace after failing to fit into the club's playing lineup. Ori Lewis

A's sign Shane Mack

OAKLAND (AP) — Free-agent outfielder Shane Mack has agreed to a one-year contract with the Oakland Athletics. Mack spent last season with the Boston Red Sox, where he hit .315 with 3 home runs and 17 RBIs in 60 games. Mack, 34, has a .300 average, with 74 HRs and 82 stolen bases in eight seasons.

India-Sri Lanka match abandoned

INDORE, India (Reuters) — The second India-Sri Lanka one-day international was abandoned yesterday after both sides complained that cracks on the pitch were too dangerous to play.

Sri Lanka was 17 for one wicket off three overs when the match was stopped following an appeal by batsman Roshan Mahanama, who was hit in the knuckles with a ball that took an unpredictable bounce.

WINNING CARDS

in yesterday's *Milal* Hapayis daily chance drawing

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9 9 Q 7

WEATHER

AROUND THE WORLD

LOW HIGH

City	Low	High	Cloud
London	4	10	cloudy
Paris	5	11	cloudy
Madrid	6	12	cloudy
Rome	7	13	cloudy
Tel Aviv	15	22	clear
Jerusalem	14	21	clear
Beirut	13	20	clear
Doha	24	31	clear
Riyadh	23	30	clear
Manama	24	31	clear
Amman	13	20	clear
Baghdad	14	21	clear
Tripoli	13	20	clear
Nicosia	13	20	clear
Yamouso	13	20	clear
Beirut	13	20	clear
Doha	24	31	clear
Riyadh	23	30	clear
Manama	24	31	clear
Amman	13	20	clear
Baghdad	14	21	clear
Tripoli	13	20	clear
Nicosia	13	20	clear
Yamouso	13	20	clear
Beirut	13	20	clear

DRIVE CAREFULLY

NFL Coach of the Year: Giants' Jim Fassel

NEW YORK (AP) — Jim Fassel, who in his rookie season led the New York Giants from last to first in the NFC East, was voted the National Football League's Coach of the Year by the AP on Wednesday.

In a season in which a half-dozen coaches did masterful jobs, Fassel collected 20 votes from a nationwide panel of 48 sports writers and broadcasters. He doubled the total of runner-up Marty Schottenheimer of Kansas City.

Tampa Bay's Tony Dungy was next with eight, followed by Bill Parcells of the New York Jets, Bill Cowher of Pittsburgh and Steve Mariucci of San Francisco, each with three, and Jimmy Johnson of Miami with one.

Fassel's charges host the Minnesota Vikings in a wild card playoff game tomorrow. "If you asked me in my wildest dreams did you think the team could win nine or 10 games, I did," Fassel said. "And if you asked me in my wildest dreams did you think the team could make

the playoffs this year, yes I did. And in your wildest dreams did you ever think you could win the division, and yeah, I really did think we could.

"But after they told me I won this award, I went home and thought about it. And you know if you asked me in my wildest dreams, did you think you would be coach of the year, no I didn't."

Fassel, 48, replaced Dan Reeves, who feuded with the Giants' front office tandem of George Young and Tom Bozuer over personnel decisions. Fassel

had no qualms about the team's management structure. He stuck to coaching and, unlike many head coaching colleagues, let someone else make the personnel decisions. "In my planning and thinking and just the way I go about my business I always think about all the potential things that can happen," he said. "I think about anything that can come up and have it addressed. My responsibility is to make sure everyone is organized and on the same page and anticipate anything that might come up."

NFL Leaders (regular-season final statistics)

NATIONAL CONFERENCE						AMERICAN CONFERENCE															
Quarterbacks						Punt Returners						Kickoff Returners									
Player	Att	Com	Yds	TD	Int	Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD				
E. Young, S.F.	356	241	3029	19	6	Palmer, Min.	34	444	13.1	57	0	Davis, Den.	369	1750	4.7	50	15				
Dan Marino, Ind.	342	202	2692	20	7	Williams, T.R.	46	577	12.6	63	1	Bettis, Pit.	375	1665	4.4	34	7				
Drew Brees, G.B.	313	304	3847	35	16	Williams, Dal.	33	407	12.3	83	1	E. George, Tex.	357	1399	3.9	30	6				
Tom Brady, New England	452	275	3036	20	12	Nichols, Was.	38	442	11.6	62	1	Lawrence, Oak.	272	1294	4.8	85	6				
Tommy L. Davis, Phil.	225	128	1573	11	6	K. Williams, Ariz.	40	462	11.6	50	0	Harrison, Ind.	309	1089	3.5	36	11				
Patrick Mahomes, Kan. City	386	217	2555	21	11	Wheaton, S.E.	34	373	11.0	36	0	Yanover, K.C.	328	1315	3.7	25	16				
Deshaun Watson, Houston	509	293	3484	19	14	Quattrone, N.D.	47	498	10.6	32	0	Johnson, Minn.	548	319	3.7	10	11				
Deshaun Watson, Houston	518	292	3283	19	12	Schroeder, G.B.	33	342	10.4	46	0	O'Donnell, N.Y.	460	259	2.7	17	7				
Deshaun Watson, Houston	477	275	3011	14	14	Tomer, W.G.	47	455	9.7	53	1	Grubbs, K.C.	314	179	1.9	11	6				
Deshaun Watson, Houston	244	134	1567	7	6	Hilburn, Det.	47	433	9.2	40	0	Blake, Cin.	317	184	2.0	8	7				
Rushers						Kickoff Returners						Rushers									
Player	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Player	Att	Yds	Avg	LG	TD				
Lamar Miller, Den.	335	2053	6.1	82	11	Bates, Car.	47	1281	27.3	56	0	Davis, Den.	104	1408	13.5	59	5				
Adrian Peterson, Minn.	329	1835	5.6	52	7	Guillford, N.C.	45	1128	25.1	102	1	McCardell, Ind.	85	1164	13.7	60	5				
Ryan Harris, Minn.	282	2466	8.7	78	6	Williams, Ariz.	59	1458	24.7	63	0	Smith, Oak.	82	1324	16.1	75	4				
Watters, Phil.	285	1140	3.9	28	7	Nichols, Was.	40	787	19.7	99	2	Thigpen, Pit.	79	1398	17.7	69	4				
E. Smith, Dal.	261	1074	4.1	44	4	K. Williams, Ariz.	47	1219	25.7	57	0	McDuffie, Minn.	76	943	12.4	55	1				
R. Harris, Chi.	275	1033	3.8	48	10	Quattrone, N.D.	47	498	10.6	32	0	Harrison, Ind.	73	866	11.9	44	3				
Heath, S.E.	234	1019	4.4	51	4	Anthony, T.R.	25	592	23.7	51	0	Sharp, Den.	72	1107	15.4	66	3				
Anderson, Atl.	290	1002	3.5	39	7	Hughes, Chi.	43	1008	23.4	58	0	Kean, K.C.	72	1072	14.9	63	7				
Dunn, T.R.	224	978	4.4	76	4	Schroeder, G.B.	24	562	23.4	40	0	Galloway, Sea.	72	1049	14.6	53	12				
Lane, Car.	182	809	4.4	50	7	Walker, Dal.	50	1167	23.3	49	0	Abdel-Jabbar, Minn.	283	892	3.2	12	15				
Receivers						Touchdowns						Punters									
Player	No	Yds	Avg	LG	TD	Player	TD	Rush	Ret	Pts	Player	No	Yds	LG	TD	Player	Att	FG	LG	Pts	
Rob Moore, Det.	104	1293	12.4	79	8	Carter, Min.	13	0	13	84	Cunningham, Dal.	24-24	34-37	53	126	Tapp, N.E.	78	3549	73	458	
Rob Moore, Det.	97	1384	14.3	47	8	Sanders, Det.	14	11	3	0	74	Anderson, S.E.	38-38	29-36	51	125	Gardocki, Ind.	67	3034	72	453
Dezhaian, Minn.	89	1049	11.8	43	13	Lawrence, Oak.	12	7	5	0	74	Longwell, G.B.	48-48	24-30	50	120	Ararig, Oak.	93	4189	63	450
Fryar, Phil.	86	1316	15.3	73	6	Freeman, G.B.	12	0	12	0	72	Ranson, Det.	66	2964	64	44.9	Barber, Jac.	66	2964	64	44.9
Freeman, G.B.	81	1243	15.3	58	12	Alton, T.R.	10	7	3	0	60	Wilkins, S.C.	89	3972	66	44.6	Bennett, S.D.	60	2598	57	43.3
Horton, Tex.	80	105																			

Inside

NY Giants' Fassel top NFL coach
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Sports Editors
Joe Hoffman & Ori Lewis

Bulls' Jackson has gotta go

CHICAGO (AP) — Five hundred regular-season victories. Five NBA titles. Tremendous rapport with his players. Outstanding loyalty to the organization in the face of more lucrative opportunities elsewhere.

And for all that, when the season ends, the Chicago Bulls likely will tell Phil Jackson: Don't leave anything behind when you clean out your office.

"It baffles me to understand that he's not welcome," Michael Jordan said of the Bulls' coach, who on Tuesday reached the 500-victory plateau faster than any coach in NBA history.

Nevertheless, Jackson has agreed to step aside after this season at the behest of owner Jerry Reinsdorf and general manager Jerry Krause, who seem overly anxious to begin rebuilding an aging — but definitely still championship-caliber — team.

Jackson, who probably ranked Reinsdorf by siding too strongly with players in contract situations and by taking some verbal jabs at Krause, is going the politically correct route these days.

What about being squeezed out after what could be a third straight championship season and sixth in eight years? "I don't think there's any squeezing going on," Jackson said. "This is a mutual agreement between Jerry Reinsdorf and me."

Jordan used the occasion of Jackson's milestone victory to reiterate that he'll retire if the Bulls change coaches.

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From Tyson's bite to Tiger's might

The good, bad and bizarre of 1997

NEW YORK (AP) — There was the usual sampling of drama, dispute, shame and glory in 1997, and thanks to Mike Tyson, there was even the taste of the bizarre.

On the winning side, Brazil looked like everybody's bet to win their fifth World Cup. New Zealand's All Blacks dominated with an undefeated season and Martina Hingis and Tiger Woods seemingly made tennis and golf their private playgrounds.

Elsewhere, the West Indies officially saw their fall from cricket's top rung, and Eric Cantona, Miguel Indurain and Carl Lewis left the competitive world altogether.

And then there were those moments that couldn't be classified as winning or losing, just plain weird.

Certainly Tyson's two-course snack on Evander Holyfield's ears during their World Boxing Association title bout in Las Vegas on June 28 was at the top of the list.

The incident was so incredulous, most watching the fight on TV had to strain to hear referee Mills Lane explanation to ringside officials to determine what had happened.

Upset at what he felt were intentional head butts, Tyson first bit Holyfield on the right ear, then after order was restored, on the left. Following the two bites in the closing minute of the third round, Lane disqualified Tyson.

Tyson was suspended for a year and fined \$3 million, and boxing endured another black mark on a sport nearly obscured by them.

The "Bite Fight" or "Bite of the Century" as it was called wasn't even the only peculiar moment for boxing in 1997, just the oddest.

In February, Lane had to disqualify Oliver McCall in a heavy-weight bout with Lennox Lewis when McCall refused to fight after the fifth round. When Lane declared the bout over, McCall, who was returning from drug rehabilitation, burst into tears.

Bizarre behavior, though, wasn't limited to boxing. In December, Larell Sprewell had his \$32m contract with the Golden State Warriors voided and was thrown out of the NBA for a year for trying to strangle and strike his own coach P.J. Carlesimo.

By contrast, soccer had an unusually tranquil year although Diego Maradona continued to be at war with officials over his drug-abuse problems. At least twice he announced his retirement but, by the end of the year, no one seemed sure it was true.

A record 32 teams were happy that they're going to the World Cup, leaving 140 more who tried hanging in there.

Brazil rolled through the Copa



Tiger Woods celebrates his Masters' win in April. (Reuters)

America and Confederations Cup, and despite looking unbeatable to most, was still being criticized at home, most notably by Pele.

Ronaldo was probably the biggest reason for Brazil's continued domination. The 21-year-old phenomenon led the Spanish first division in scoring with Barcelona, then transferred for a record \$32m to Inter Milan and put it atop the Italian Serie A.

All the while, he was dazzling crowds with his new striking partner, Romario, and forming Brazil's "Ro-Ro" combination.

Conversely, Brazil's final opponent at the 1994 World Cup, Italy, struggled. It's offense sputtered and, after facing the prospect of not making the World Cup for the first time since 1958, sneaked in the back door by beating Russia in a two-leg playoff.

Soccer had its moment of shock, too, when Cantona announced he was retiring after five years with Manchester United at the relatively early age of 30.

SOCCER WAS not alone in seeing major players depart.

After an unprecedented five consecutive victories in the Tour de France, Spain's Miguel Indurain also quit, turning over the sport's mantle to Jan Ullrich.

Ullrich was so dominating in only his second Tour that he won by over nine minutes, the biggest margin of victory since 1984.

The 23-year-old was the first

German to win the event, taking the overall lead on the 10th stage and riding in front to the end.

One sport that lost one of its biggest stars over the last two decades was athletics, which bade farewell to Carl Lewis.

Little appreciated by his fellow Americans outside the Olympics, the eight-time world champion and nine-time Olympic gold medalist said goodbye in an exhibition meet in his hometown of Houston.

While Lewis bowed out, the amazing Sergei Bubka defied an Achilles tendon injury in Athens to win the pole vault for the sixth World Championship in a row, the first being back in 1983.

But athletics' most memorable moments were the records that fell in the 800, 5,000, 10,000 and 3,000-meter steeplechase, all in a matter of weeks.

Wilson Kipketer, the 26-year-old Kenyan turned Dane, first equaled Sebastian Coe's 16-year-old 800 record of 1 minute, 41.24 seconds in July. On Aug. 13, he lowered it by .49 of a second and then lowered that two weeks later with a time of 1:24.11.

In the world of baseball, the Florida Marlins created the now-you-see-it, now-you-don't dynasty. Almost before the World Series flag stopped fluttering, owner Wayne Huizenga had sold off about a half dozen team stars. He's a Blockbuster in more ways than one. The most memorable moment was the home run assault



Michael Jordan led the Bulls to their 5th crown. (Reuters)

on Roger Maris's 61 between Mark McGwire (58) and Ken Griffey, Jr. (56).

Also of note was the \$75 million price tag attached to NL Cy Young award winner Pedro Martinez's move from Montreal to Boston.

IF THE Marlins owned baseball in 1997, Tiger Woods and Martina Hingis had near exclusive leases in golf and tennis.

In his first full season as a pro, Woods won only four events on the US PGA Tour, but his dominance of the American Masters, winning by a record 12 strokes and becoming the first non-white to triumph where blacks didn't compete until 1975, caught everybody's attention.

Woods far from dominated the whole year. South Africa's Ernie Els won the US Open and American Justin Leonard upstaged his countryman at the British Open.

But neither Woods nor Leonard could do much to help the Americans from stopping Europe from retaining the Ryder Cup.

In tennis, about the only thing that stopped Hingis in 1997 was a horse named Tina.

It was Tina in April who threw the then 16-year-old Swiss, forcing her off the WTA Tour for several weeks because of a knee injury. It was enough to derail Hingis from becoming the youngest woman to claim the Grand Slam.

Hingis already had won the Australian Open in January. The

injuries, Hingis swatted away opponents like an easy forehead, claiming Wimbledon, the US Open and the tour's top ranking.

Federer stayed atop the men's game, winning his ninth and 10th Grand Slam titles, but an injury in the opening singles round of the Davis Cup Final, where Sweden walked away with a 5-0 sweep.

The All Blacks dominated rugby union even more than Hingis did in tennis, winning 11 of 12 tests and drawing 26-26 with England in the other in its final match.

The Chicago Bulls also returned to dominating form. With Michael Jordan playing in his first full season back from his experiment as a baseball player, the Bulls lost only four games in the playoffs, culminating with a 4-2 series victory over the Utah Jazz for the title.

At the other end was the West Indies, once feared, now an also-ran.

They were beaten by Australia in the beginning of the year and then were swept in a three-test series by Pakistan in December.

In auto racing, Canadian Jacques Villeneuve claimed the Formula One title his father Gilles died trying to win.

And he did it by fending off a 48th-lap running attempt in the final race of the season by the only man who could have kept him from the title, Ferrari's Michael Schumacher.

Villeneuve went on to win the title by finishing third, and Schumacher, who ended up in the gravel, got off with only his second place in the final drivers' standings voided.

The punishment, or lack thereof, was harshly criticized in the media. But in a year of bites and punches, it somehow didn't seem that out of the ordinary.

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